

2dartist.

113

Issue 113 | May 2015

120 PAGES
OF EXPERT
ADVICE &
TUITION

Exploring strong shapes

Szymon Biernacki shares
his fun cartoon style and
his latest projects

plus

- 10 of the best digital images
- **Matte painting epic scenery**
- Pin-up painting techniques
- and much more!

Editor's Letter



JESS SERJENT-TIPPING
Deputy Editor

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Welcome to 2dartist issue 113!

Welcome to issue 113 of 2dartist! From surreal and stylized illustrations, to matte painting and pin-up girls, this month's issue has bags of style to help you hone your skills. We speak to AJ Frena about the inspiration behind her often surrealistic imagery, and discover the portfolio of Szymon Biernacki.

If you're in the mood for sketching, take a peek at Max Schulz's stunning mix of realistic and fantasy-themed imagery, and Brun Croes' step-by-step guide to drawing creatures. We've got a whole host of top images – and more – to aid and inspire your 2D art work. As always, there's something for everyone. Enjoy!

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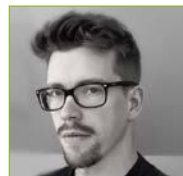
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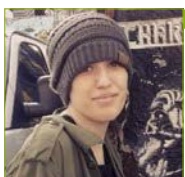
SZYMON BIERNACKI

Szymon Biernacki is a digital artist based in Warsaw, Poland, working in the animation industry. Currently he is an art director working with The SPA Studios on various feature animated movies.



BRUN CROES

Brun Croes is a freelance illustrator working in the animation, games and entertainment industry. He's been active as a professional for four years focusing mainly on visual development.



AJ FRENA

AJ Frena is an illustrator who focuses on surrealistic imagery, most of them featuring animals. She studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City before moving to Pittsburgh, PA, where she currently resides.



CAROLINE GARIBA

Caroline Gariba is a freelance illustrator based in São Paulo, Brazil, working with digital illustrations for advertising/publishing media and game concepts. Her past clients include Fantasy Flight Games.



MAX SCHULZ

Max Schulz started out at a small studio in Germany six years ago, and is now living the auspicious life of a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the film and videogame industry.



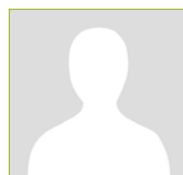
PIOTR JABŁOŃSKI

Piotr Jabłoński is a concept artist and illustrator from Białystok, Poland. His clients include Applibot, Inc., Cloud Share Inc., Evermotionvfx, VFX workshops and Platige Image.



JESSICA ROSSIER

Originally from Switzerland, Jessica Rossier is based in France. She mostly works for films, videogames, or advertising companies by providing high-quality visual assets, as a concept artist and matte painter.



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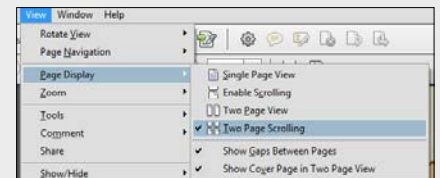
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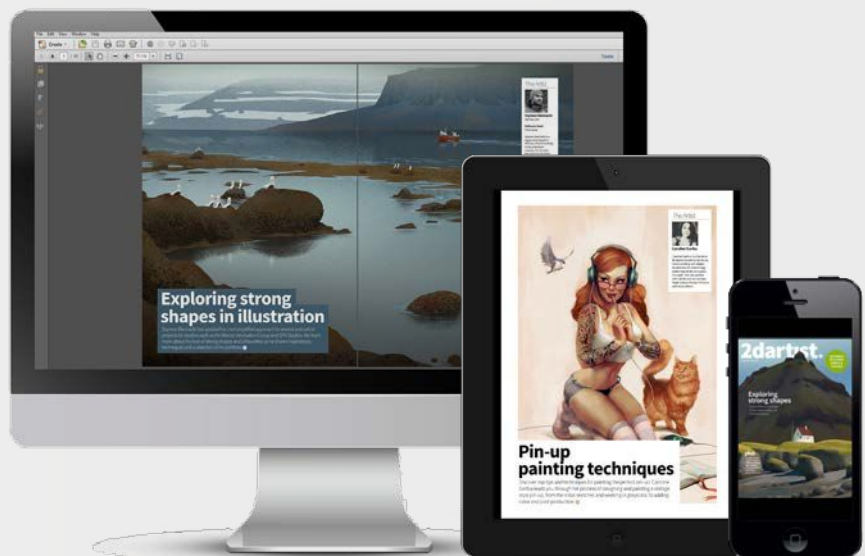
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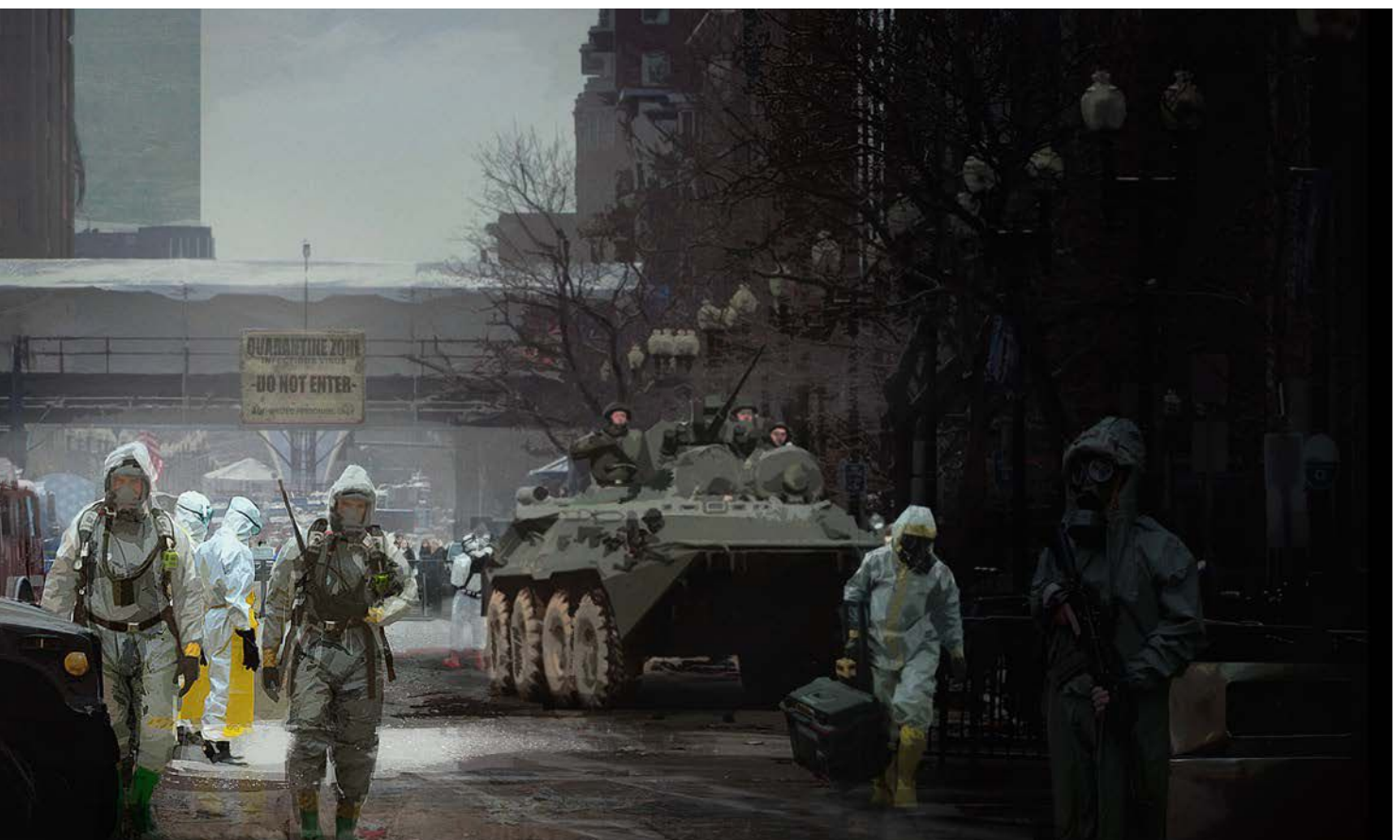
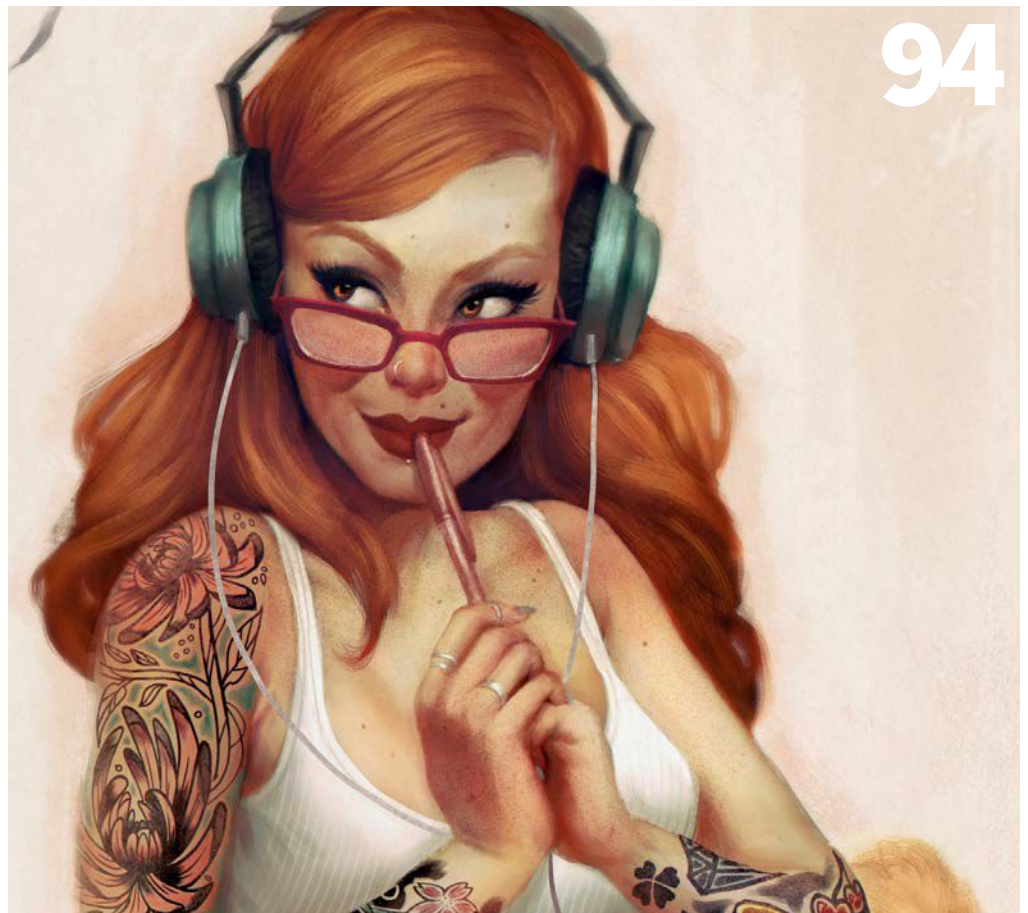


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Exploring strong shapes in illustration

Szymon Biernacki has applied his cool simplified approach to several animation projects for studios such as the Warner Animation Group and SPA Studios. We learn more about his love of strong shapes and silhouettes as he shares inspirations, techniques and a selection of his portfolio [▶](#)

The Artist



Szymon Biernacki
biernac.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Szymon Biernacki is a digital artist based in Warsaw, Poland working in the animation industry. For the last two years he has been working exclusively with The SPA Studios (Sergio Pablos Animation) on various feature animated movies.



Szymon Biernacki (also known as lordbiernac) is a Polish artist currently based in Warsaw working on animations. Szymon's environments and characters are in a unique style that is instantly recognizable. "I realized that I respond the most to artwork that has strong shapes and silhouettes even if it's extremely simple" he says when talking about the development of this style.

When Szymon isn't at the cinema, reading, watching football or traveling to exciting places, he is hard at work bringing his illustrations to life in various animated movies.

2dartist: Hi Szymon, thanks for chatting with us today. First, could you tell our readers a little bit about yourself and your background in digital art? Where did it all begin?

Szymon Biernacki: So it all began when I started my last year of high school and it was high time to decide what to do with my future. At that time in Poland you had to pass exams to get enrolled in college, and some of the more prestigious faculties had very particular subjects on the exams that you couldn't learn in high school. I chose architecture because I heard that the main part of the exam was

drawing from the imagination, and since I loved to draw since I was a little kid, I thought it was a good choice. Then I found out that to actually have a chance of passing the exam one should attend a special course to learn so-called architectural drawing and some basics of design.

At one of those courses I got my hands on the album *The Art of Revenge of the Sith* and I saw the digital artwork of artists such as Ryan Church and I was blown away. I didn't understand at the time how those images were created, but soon after my teacher from the course explained it to me and I found out about the existence of a device called a graphic tablet...

2da: What was it about the digital tools that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

SB: I think it was a combination of things. At the time when I got my first tablet a career in the industry didn't really seem like an actual possibility for a guy from Poland. It was more like saying 'I want to go to Hollywood and be a famous actor', something in the category of childish dreams. So I can't say that I actually wanted to pursue a career in the industry. I just kept learning it because I loved to paint and I was

fascinated by the range of possibilities that digital tools gave me, compared to drawing with pencil or painting with watercolors; especially in terms of light and colors. I remember I was particularly fascinated by the possibility of putting colorful rim lights everywhere, haha!

At that time digital art and concept art was basically the same thing to me – I didn't make a distinction between the technique and the subject matter. In my mind one didn't exist without the other because the only digital artwork that I ever saw was in the artbooks from movies and on Craig Mullins' website. So I started with painting sci-fi images and later turned towards a more cartoony style that felt more comfortable to me.

2da: What is your biggest source of inspiration? Is there a particular style, a mood or scene you are drawn to?

SB: Of course my biggest source of inspiration is other artists. Thankfully there's no particular style that I like the most because I would most probably end up just copying it. I like various styles and artists. I won't be very original to name Eyvind Earl like probably most of the concept artists working in the ►



● Szymon's entry for the 'B-Movie Challenge' on CGSociety, which won the Image Master Award



● A personal illustration





● A personal image where Szymon was testing out brushes and experimenting with style

● A personal painting inspired by Szymon's trip to Iceland



● A personal painting inspired by Szymon's trip to Iceland



animation industry would do. The way he simplified shapes and looked for patterns was amazing.

I also love the style of *Hellboy*, both in terms of drawings by Mike Mignola and the use of color by Dave Steward. I love the mood of *Hellboy* as well. Even though a lot of my own images are lighthearted I really enjoy moody, mysterious pictures. The style of characters by J.C. Layendecker, Nico Marlet or Anette

“I started to be honest with myself and not think too much about what and how I should or shouldn't paint”

Marnat is also a huge inspiration. The list of artists is very long but the common denominator that connects their work is a certain level of simplification of the objects they depict.

2da: You have a distinct style which is very recognizable, how did you come to develop this signature style?

SB: To be honest I don't really think I have a style of my own. I can tell you why I paint the way I do right now but 'my style' is probably going to evolve along with my taste for art. At some point I was really obsessed with the idea of developing a signature ►



- This painting was a birthday gift for Szymon's girlfriend. She's a coffee lover...



🕒 **Artist Timeline** Szymon's career so far

2010: Won the Image Master Award in CGSociety Challenge XXV – 'B-Movie'

2011: Moved to another country for the first time to work in the industry

2013: Teamed up with The SPA Studios

2013: First feature animated movie (*Smallfoot*, Warner Animation Group)

2014: Had a major role in *Klaus*, a unique animation project

style, but it only led to frustration. But the moment I started to be honest with myself and not think too much about what and how I should or shouldn't paint, things started to be easier and I started to enjoy painting again.

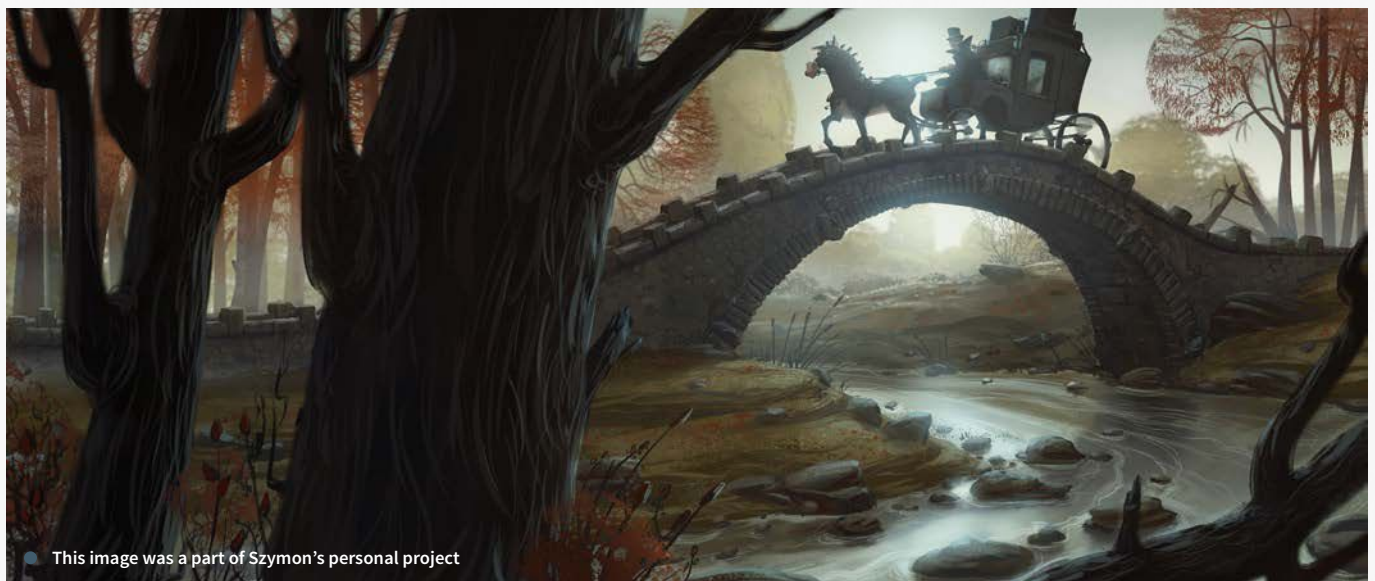
So for example at some point I realized that I'm not really interested in realistic textures any more. I'm fascinated with how light works, but not in a sense of what it does to the quality of the surfaces that it hits, but rather to the value and color relationships that it creates. I realized that I respond the most to artwork that has strong shapes and silhouettes even if it's extremely simple. And in my own work I noticed that the rendering phase has become a little boring to me.

My workflow used to be the design sketch, establishing basic value and color relationships, and then rendering details to make it look like a frame from an animated movie. And after a while I noticed that once I had the first two steps down, the last one didn't really improve the image in my eyes, and sometimes even watered down the initial statement I was looking to make. I still look for volume in my work, but it's much more simplified.

When I paint I try to focus on the aspects that I believe are worth emphasizing, and if I just like something and don't really understand why it works better to me, I try to listen to my gut hoping that I'll figure it out in the future.

2da: Could you choose one of your favorite past images (that you've created) and explain how you created it, and why it's your favorite?

SB: That's a tough question because I'm rarely satisfied with my own work. If I had to choose one image that I still have a sentiment for it would probably be *Auditions* which was my entry for the



● Visual development
for animated movie
Klaus. © Sergio Pablos
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'B-Movie Challenge' on CGSociety. The process of creation for that image was quite painful, in a metaphorical and actually literal sense as well. I really struggled with finding a good idea for that image and with getting the composition and character poses to work. Also a few days before the deadline for the challenge I got a strong inflammation in my eyes and even the slightest change of light caused some serious pain. But I was really determined to finish the painting, so I was sitting in a dark room for few days and I painted by squinting my eyes all the time. And I actually managed to win the main prize. It's a cheesy story but it's true.

2da: Are there any areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into (and why)?

SB: I'm slowly starting to get into 3D modeling a bit more. So far I don't really need it for work; I only sometimes use SketchUp for some very simple models. But recently it's been proving more and more useful to me. In the past I used to get really bored after even 30 minutes of doing anything in 3D, and I just wanted to get back to painting, but now I actually enjoy the possibility of shaking up my workflow a bit.

I'm also starting to learn a little bit about photography, but that's purely on an amateur basis. Just for me to be able to take some interesting photos during my travels and maybe learn a little more about composition.

2da: How do you spend your free time away from the demands and deadlines of the creative industry?

SB: I watch quite a lot of movies and regularly go to the cinema. I read books as well. I'm also a football (soccer) fan so I watch games quite often. I try to travel whenever it's possible. Recently I've been to Iceland and absolutely fell in love with that country. What a feast for the eyes for someone who designs environments! And of course I paint and draw for myself from time to time.

2da: What has been your favorite commission/project to work on so far and why?

SB: My favorite project so far is the one that I've been working on for the last year and I'm still on it. I'm working on the visual development for a feature animated movie *Klaus*. It's an original story by Sergio Pablos (the creator of *Despicable Me*) and along with Marcin Jakubowski we're art directing the project. We developed the style of the whole movie, and apart from character design we're in charge of everything visual.

We've recently finished a teaser trailer that will probably hit the internet pretty soon. The amazing thing about this project is that it's traditional 2D animation, but we've come up with some pretty unique visual and technical solutions that I believe have never been applied to traditional animation the way we do it. I'm completely in love with this project and can't wait to be able to show some more materials to the world.

2da: If you could give future digital artists just one piece of advice on working in the industry, what would it be?

SB: I'd say make sure you're a good person to work with. Producers, directors and art directors want to be sure they can rely on you and that you will always meet the deadlines, be flexible, be willing to take directions and they won't have to ask you twice for anything. If you establish a good reputation clients will keep coming back to you and with time you'll gain more and more creative freedom because they will know they can trust you.

Make sure you communicate well, everything is as clear as possible, you're well organized with your work and you're a team player. The producers and other artists will love you for that and they will want to keep working with you in the future.

In the animation industry people jump from studio to studio and from one production to another, and if you show that you're a professional, if anyone asks them if they can recommend an artist they will point to you.

2da: Finally, what can we expect to see from you in the future?

SB: In the nearest future I should be able to show some more artworks from *Klaus* but probably not too many.

I also worked for a year on visual development for *Smallfoot*, a feature animated movie produced by Warner Animation Group, but as far as I know there's still a long way before the movie gets released in theaters, so I don't know when I'll be able to share my work from that project. ●

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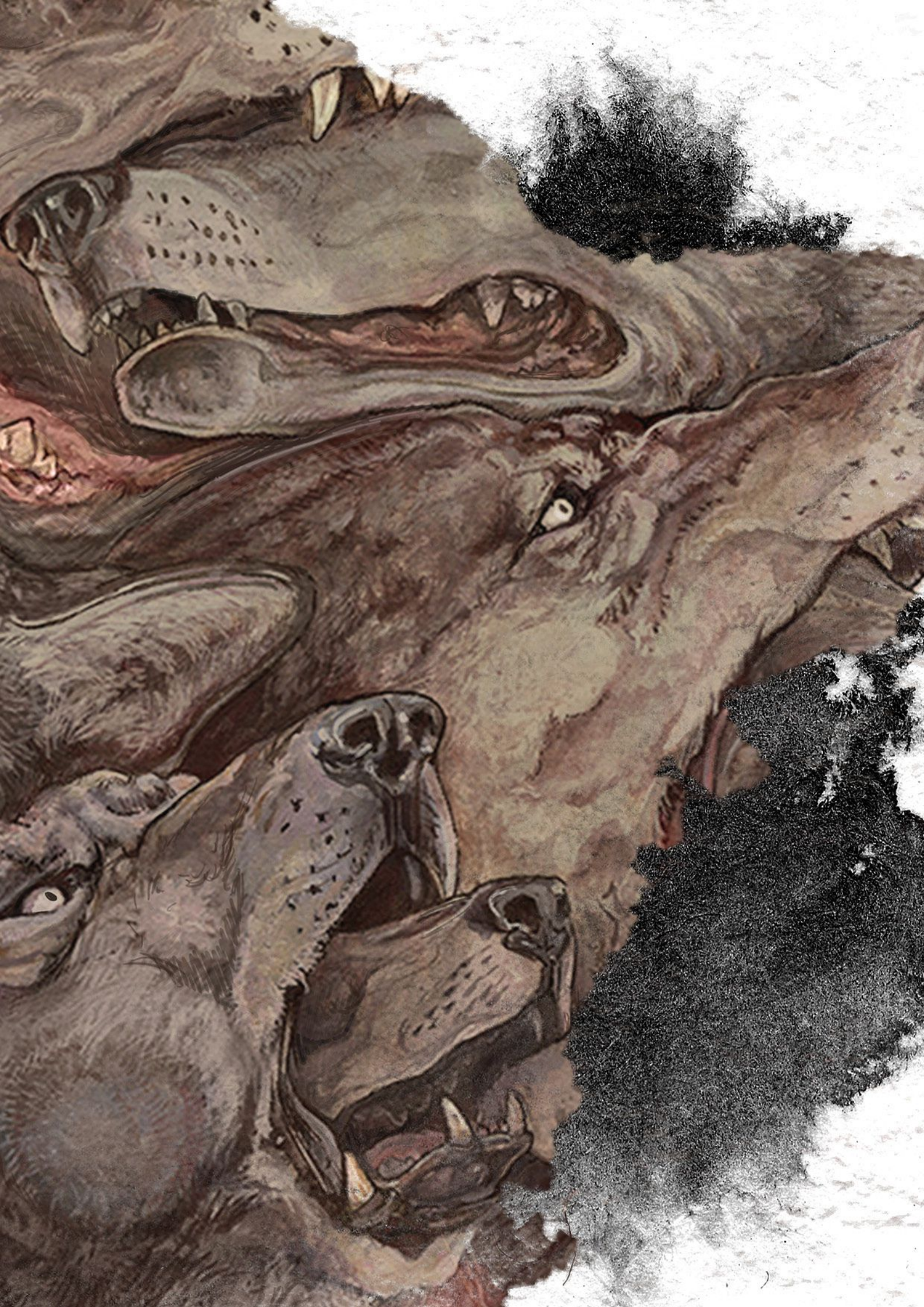


An inspiring collection of drawings and articles exploring the sketchbooks and artistic practices of 50 talented sci-fi concept artists.

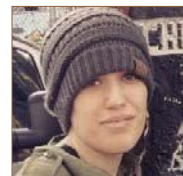
Sketches and drawings are the foundations of great art, where thoughts and concepts first come to life as an image. In *Sketching from the Imagination: Sci-fi*, 50 talented traditional and digital artists showcase their sketches, share their inspirations, and explain their approaches to drawing sci-fi art. From doodles of robots and aliens, to concept designs for spaceships and speculative life-forms, *Sketching from the Imagination: Sci-fi* is a visually stunning collection packed with useful tips and creative insights – an invaluable resource that will inspire artists of all abilities.

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The Artist



AJ Frena

aj-frena.com

Materials Used:

Acrylic, watercolor, gouache,
Photoshop

AJ Frena is an illustrator who focuses on surrealistic imagery, most of them featuring animals. She studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City before moving to Pittsburgh, PA, where she currently resides with a lucky black cat and a lazy border collie.

T R A D I T I O N A L S P O T L I G H T

Creating surreal animal illustrations

AJ Frena provides a glimpse into her portfolio of illustrations, which blend nature with the abstract ▶

AJ Frena is an artist from Texas who studied in New York City, eventually graduating from the School of Visual Arts. AJ's paintings and digital illustrations focus on the surrealistic imagery of animals, but also seem to connect with human behavior.

Illustration inspired by nature, such as plants, human anatomy and animals are such a pleasing sight, especially when the drawing is done well!

AJ adds another dimension to those natural elements by combining realistic drawings of animals with abstract compositions, and then places the whole scene in a surrealistic environment. The results are often stunning, unique illustrations that you can't take your eyes off.

2dartist: Hello! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

AJ Frena: Thank you so much for the interview!

I'm originally from Texas and moved to New York right after high school. Growing up I aspired to be an artist from a very young age, drawing influence from Disney, anime (mostly Ghibli), movies and comics. I guess this is appropriate, considering that illustrating these is now practically my career.

"There is something about holding your work in your hands, being able to see paint strokes and marks, which can't compare to digital copies"

My background as an illustrator however has been kind of eclectic. Other than showing in galleries, I have worked on multiple apparel projects including for Nike, editorial spots for magazines, concept art, comics, children's illustrations, animation and practically anything and everything else.

2da: What does your creative process involve? What medium do you prefer to work with, and please explain why?

AF: I'm a traditional artist by trade so painting will always be my favorite medium. There is something about holding your work in your hands, being able to see paint strokes and marks, which can't compare to digital copies.

However I find myself working mostly in mixed media these days, doing a good chunk of the

● **TITLE:** *Feed*
MEDIUM: Acrylic and ink on paper



painting in acrylic/ink then finishing it up digitally. This process is a lot faster so allows for me to finish a larger body of work.

2da: Can you tell us a bit about your chosen subject matter? What do all the different animals

mean to you when you employ them in your pieces of work?

AF: The animals in my work have always been about folklore. I collect bestiaries, fables and volumes of mythology; finding interest in those

that focus on the way people project human attributes on animal behavior.

“I can look back and say indubitably the biggest lesson I have learned is to not give up”

Many of my animals are meant to represent this. They're expressions of stories from my own life and those of others; from history, or tales I've read in books, and sometimes even something from a more political angle.

I find this fun and interesting to do, as animals are so rich with symbolism and mean many different things to many different people.

2da: What has your experience as a freelance artist been like? What lessons have you learned?

AF: The first years out of school were very difficult. Jobs were scarce and I could not find my footing. It was hard to find someone who would give me a chance.

Now that I have steady work and am able to work freelance full-time, I can look back and say indubitably the biggest lesson I have learned is to not give up. If you want to be an artist, sometimes getting there is all about persistence. ►



● **TITLE:** *Sleipnir*
MEDIUM: Graphite and charcoal on paper

● **TITLE:** *Explode*
MEDIUM: Acrylic, watercolor and ink on paper



● TITLE: *Princess Mononoke*
MEDIUM: Acrylic on paper and digital



● TITLE: *Ragged Wood*
MEDIUM: Acrylic and digital



● TITLE: *The Hound and the Wolf*
MEDIUM: Pencil and Digital



“In the future it would be incredible if I could focus more on my original work. Being able to make a living off of showing my non-commissioned work would be a dream come true”

2da: How do you like to spend your time when you aren't creating beautiful art?

AF: I really love to read. Also play a lot of videogames, exercise frequently and watch a lot of movies. Otherwise I enjoy spending time with my friends and family, my dog and cat. Camping and the outdoors are also amazing. Exploring my

city, finding new places to eat and hangout, is also fun.

2da: What are your big aspirations and inspirations? What will we see from you soon?

AF: At the moment I have been working with a lot of people creating collectable movie posters,



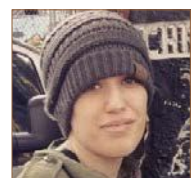
mostly for galleries, which not only is lot of fun but has helped tremendously with exposure.

I can't talk too much about some of my upcoming clients, but some of them are companies I have dreamed of working with since I was a little kid. It's an exciting time. However, in the future it would be incredible if I could focus more on my

original work. Being able to make a living off of showing my non-commissioned work would be a dream come true.

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak to 2dartist! ●

The Artist

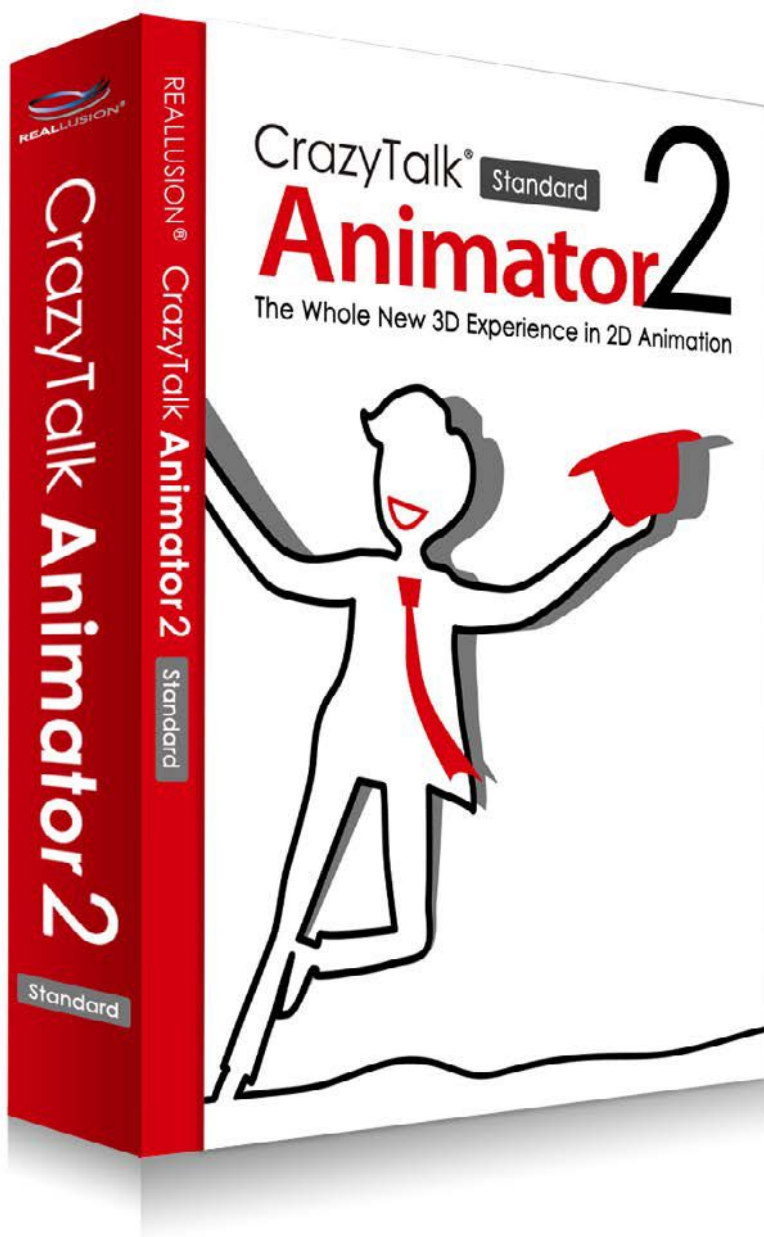


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MAX SCHULZ

Sketchbook

Max Schulz explains how he uses visual and physical experiences to inspire his creativity, and converts them into a stunning mix of realistic and fantasy-themed imagery in his sketchbook. Here we take a peek at some of his amazing creations.

The Artist



Max Schulz
xoco1.com

Max Schulz started out at a small studio in Germany six years ago, and is now living the auspicious life of a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the film and videogame industry.

Max Schulz reveals his intriguing illustrative sketchbook of life...

One of the things I enjoy most about working as a creative is having time where you can let your mind ponder. Having a space to fall back to is the ideal way of closing yourself out from the surrounding and sinking into your thoughts. The sketchbook is this moveable studio space that one can carry around, and yet portrays the same calm feeling of being home. Working in it almost feels like therapy for me, where I balance the sometimes thrilling hours of working for clients and still allow myself to lose focus and time, try weird things and draw bolder visions.

“For me it is of great importance to fill my visual library with versatile impressions and shapes by going out and experiencing things that might not even be directly related to art and culture”

Inspiration and ideas

Most of the time, I get inspired by a combination of works that stick in my mind and moments when I get thrown into an unknown and provoking environment. For me it is of great importance to fill my visual library with versatile impressions and shapes by going out and experiencing things that might not even be directly related to art and culture. This way you not only assure that your work doesn't end up looking like another's, you also enrich your pieces with ideas, structure or surface conditions, ideally helping them to gain a more unique quality.

Materials

When I work on paper or cardboard I almost always fall back on using a black ballpoint pen. The value range of this is far higher than the usual pencil, and its strokes are unforgiving which generates the unique feel of no return. Aside from that I love mixing different pencils, brush pens and colored ballpoints for additional depth.

Sketching techniques

I allow myself the utmost freedom in my sketches, which keeps me warmed-up and thinking, although one might say that I work fairly realistic at times. Larger strokes and lines mark the beginning of the process, from which I proceed gradually as the content develops into using finer lines or redefining areas. ●

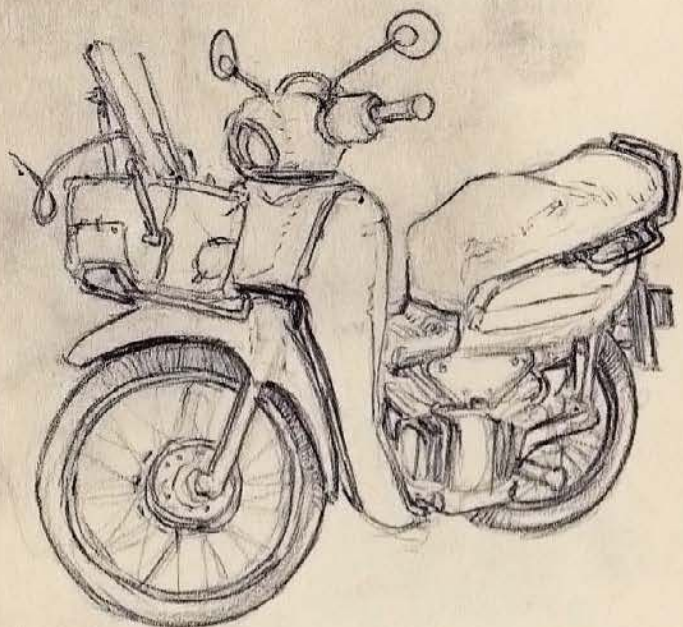
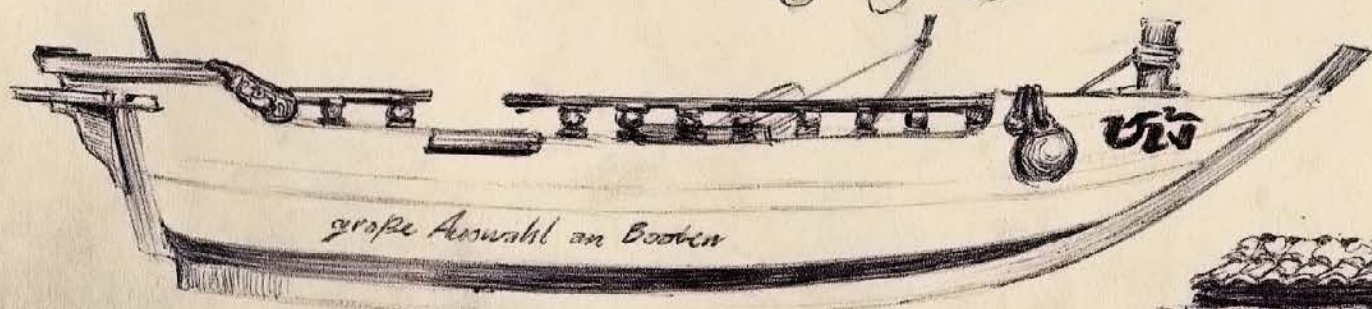


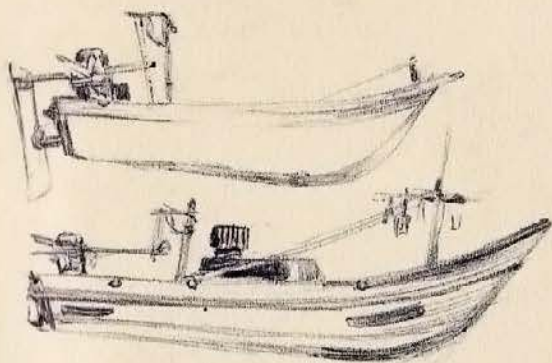
01

01 02

I usually use every opportunity to attend life-drawing events. Not only to get better at anatomy, but also for the nice atmosphere of getting to know more interesting creatives









04 I lost myself completely here when rendering out shape ideas for this critical-looking alien diplomat

05 A page out of my moleskin where I found myself inspired by classical literature and its written description of objects



05

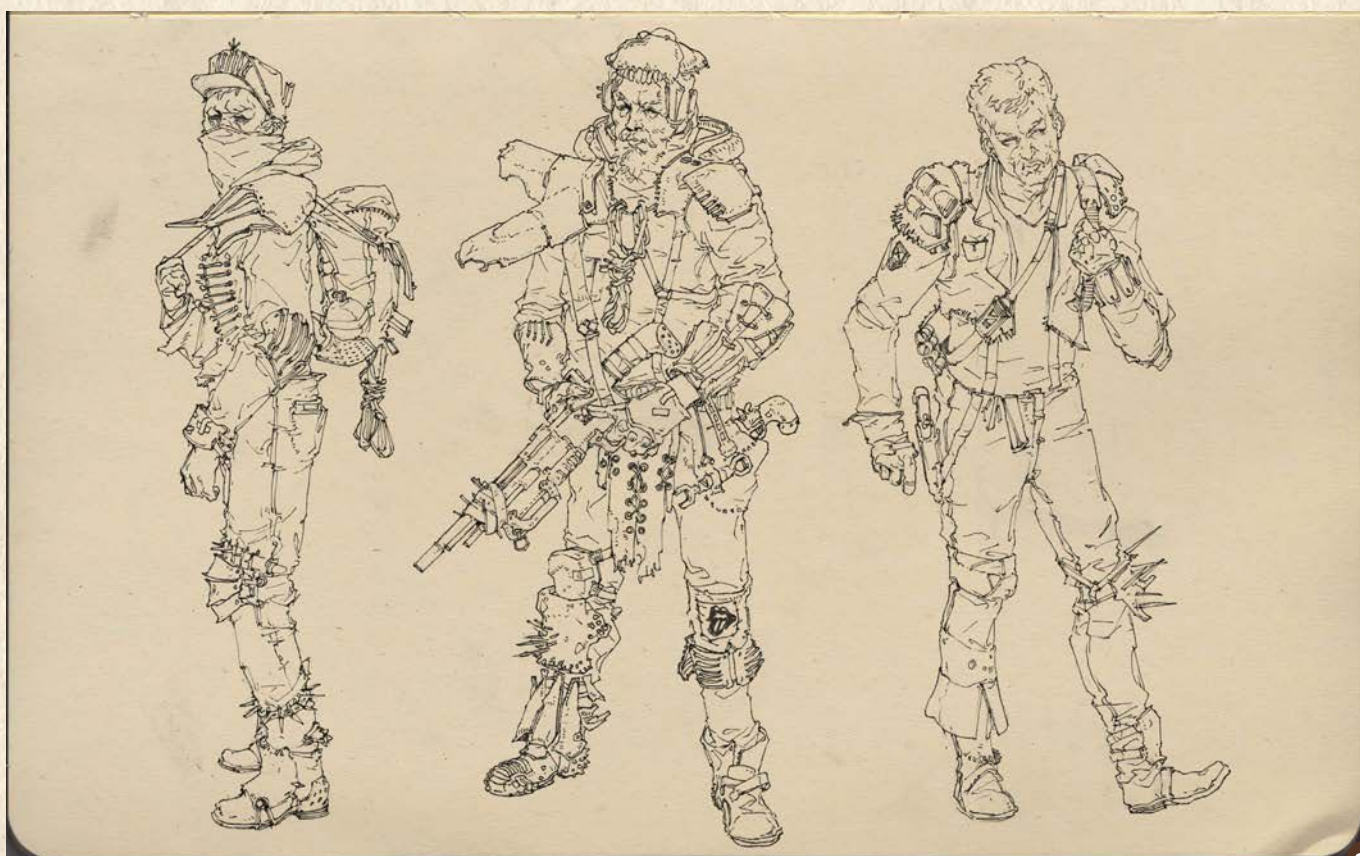


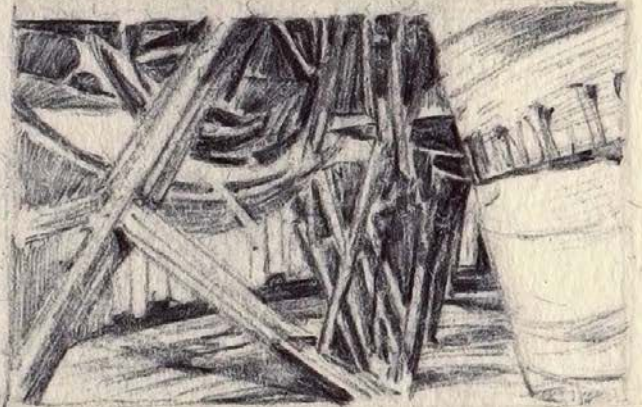


THE VANISHING

06 After looking through other sketchbooks of friends I felt like fusing a few styles of what I had seen, combining it into a weirdly hovering keyboard man!

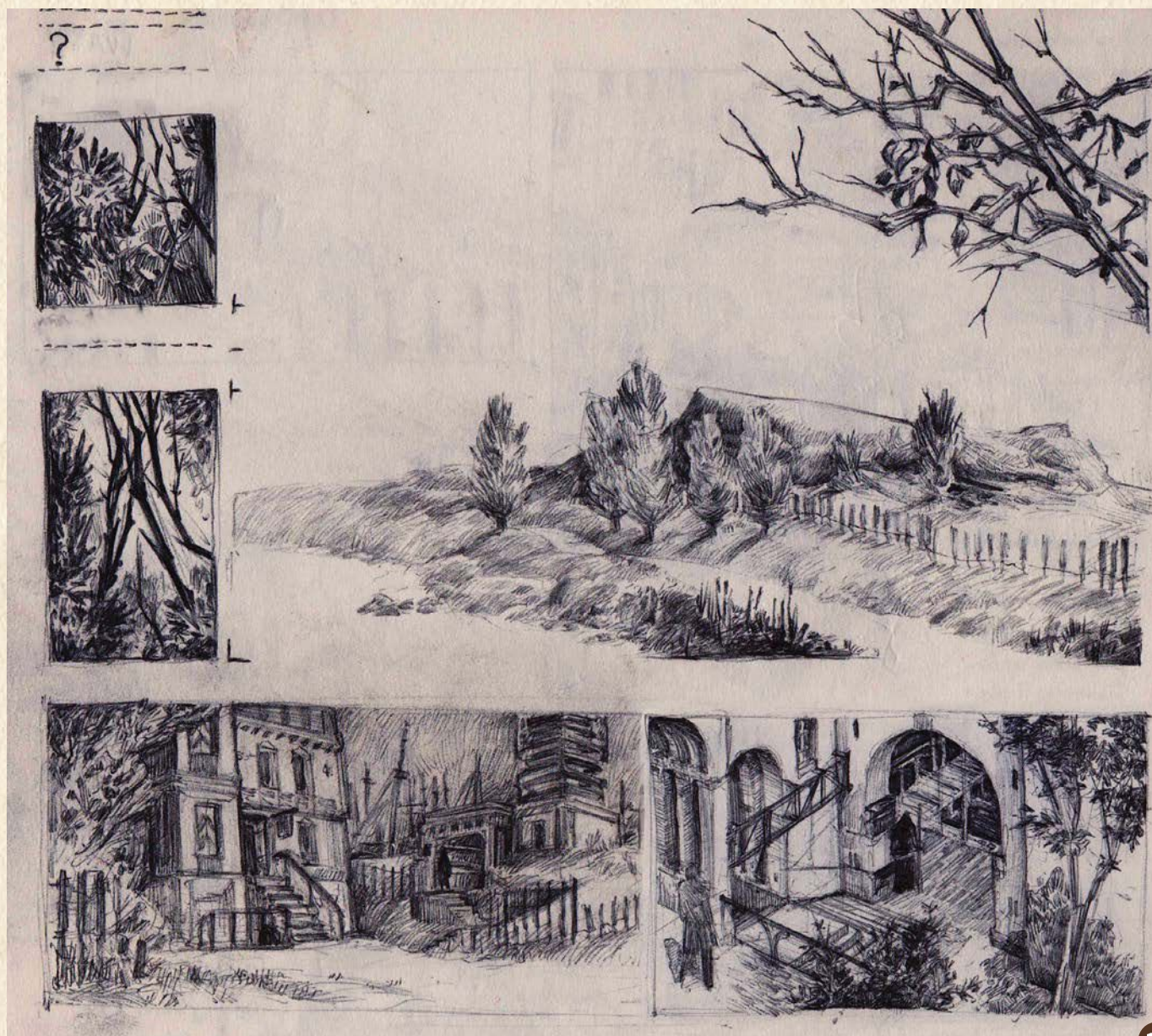
07 Exploring new ideas and piling them sometimes results in odd visions of disjointed creatures





10

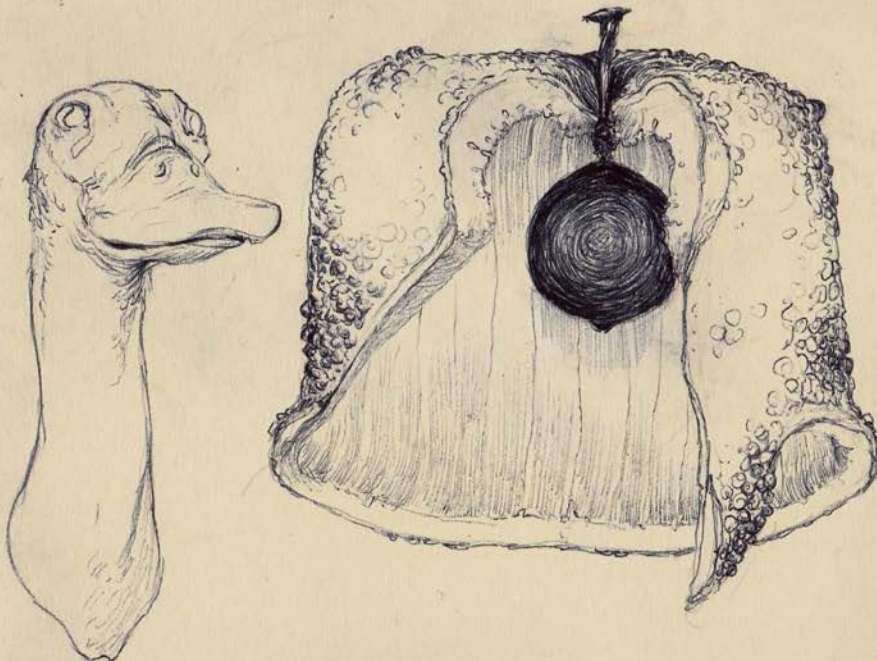
- 08 While working on set characters I often use sketch iterations of parts to nail the feel or mood down before going into the final lines
- 09 These were character and detail developments I did before starting on a new project to get the right feeling on the visuals the product/client needed
- 10 Little panels are not uncommon in my sketchbook realm. Everything looks neat in a panel, especially otherworldly environments that are usually out of my comfort zone



11



12



08 Here I was working on first scene concepts for a personal game project I started with a good friend last year. Set along a fictional 1920s French coast, our goal was to achieve a dark and bleak atmosphere

12 These side-faces are inspired by sketches from Allen Williams, his form language being a big inspiration for me. The tentacle creature was part of a one-week challenge I had with fellow artists, resulting in a lot of eerie designs

13 Once a week we meet at a bar with illustrators from around the area - this is the usual outcome of such an event

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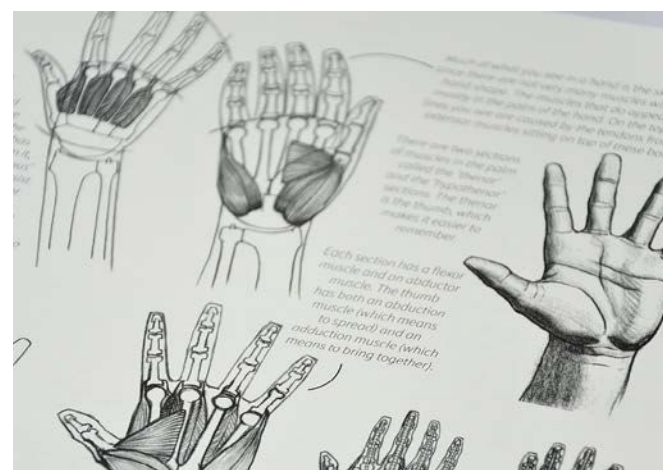
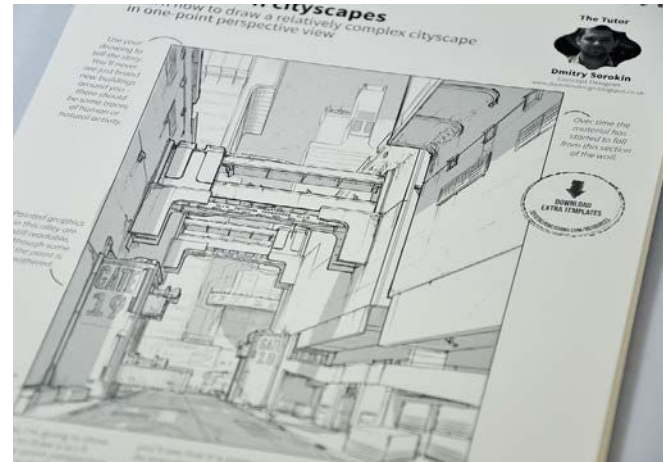
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Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



New Earth Vista

Sung Choi

Year created: 2015

Web: sung-choi.com

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Quarantine Zone

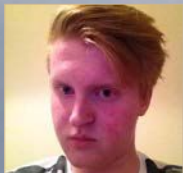
David Tilton

Year created: 2014

Web: artstation.com/artist/tiltond







Searhus

Brandon Gobey

Year created: 2014

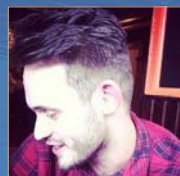
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Home

Paul Canavan

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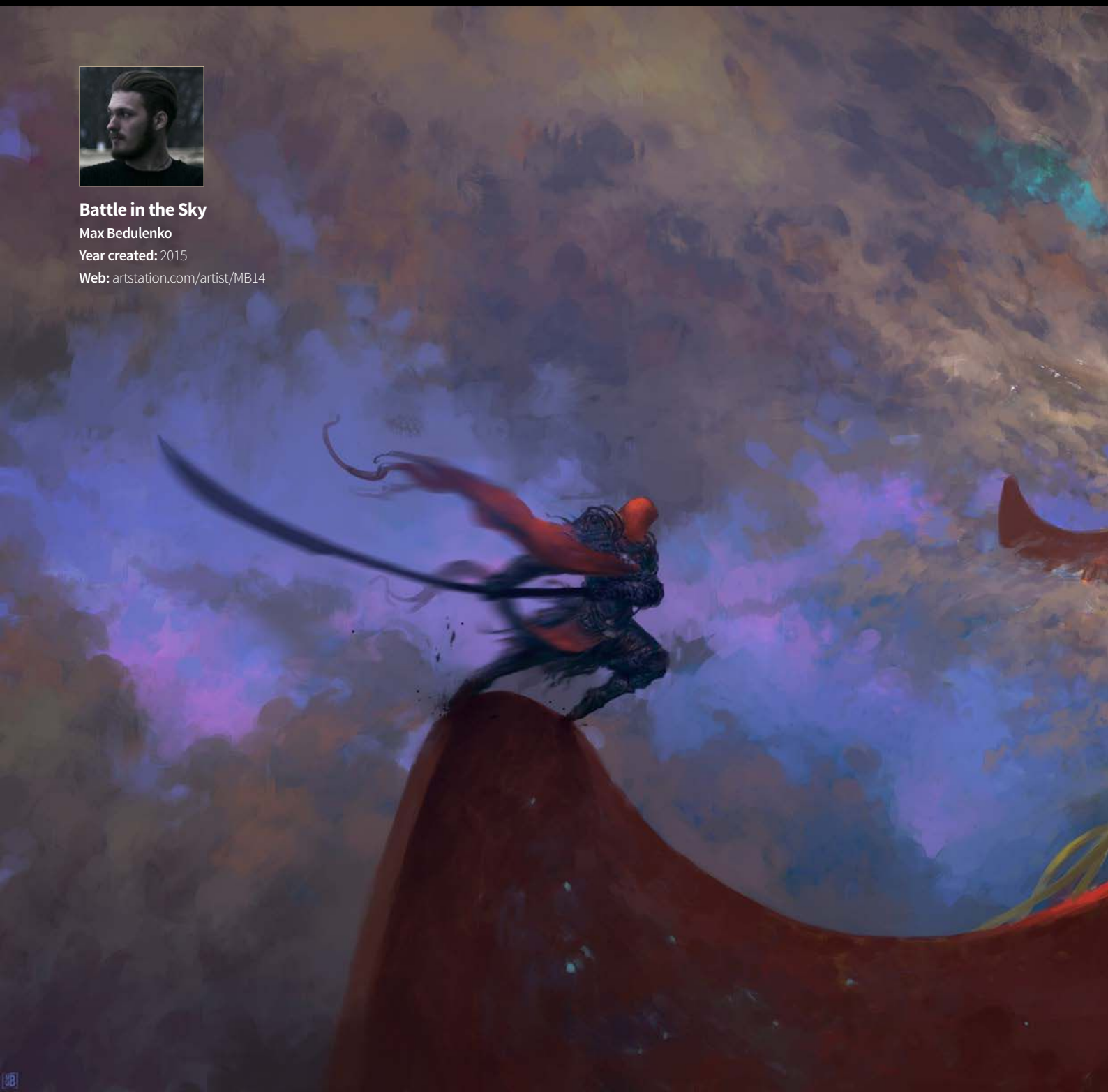


Battle in the Sky

Max Bedulenko

Year created: 2015

Web: artstation.com/artist/MB14







Kepler 9d

Eren ARIK

Year created: 2015

Web: erenarik.com





Botty!

Giorgio Baroni

Year created: 2015

Web: giorgiobaroni.artstation.com

© Giorgio Baroni





Robosam #3

Lukasz Poduch

Year created: 2015

Web: artstation.com/artist/lukaszpoduch



Too Late

Sergey Grechanyuk

Year created: 2015

Web: artstation.com/artist/grekgss







HATCHET

Jakub Rebelka

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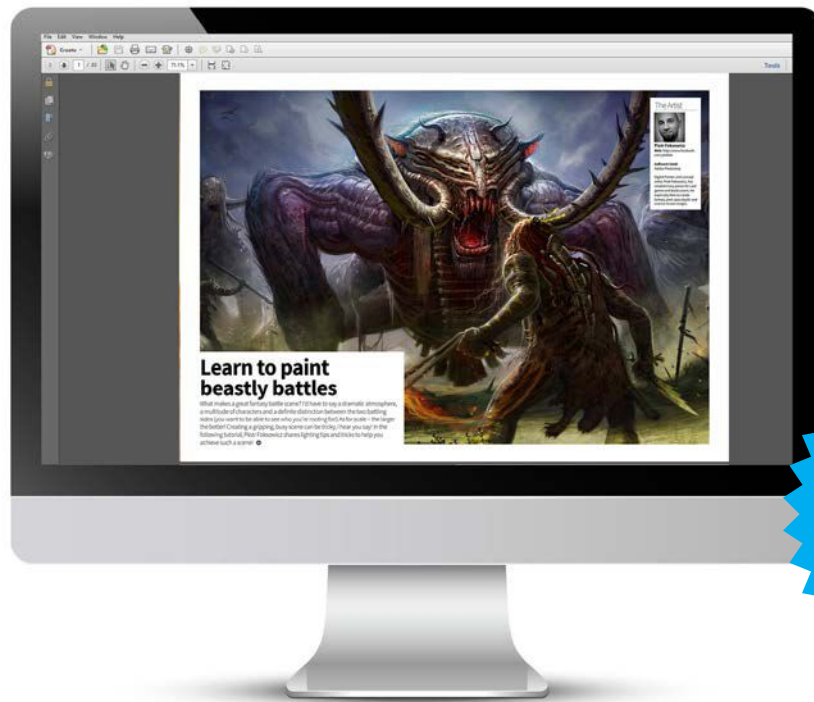
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FREE RESOURCES

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The Artist



Jessica Rossier

jess-studio.com

Software Used:

CINEMA 4D, Photoshop

Jessica Rossier is based in France. She mostly works for films, videogames, or advertising companies by providing high-quality visual assets, as a concept artist and matte painter. Since 2008, Jessica has worked with Bastien Grivet and in 2013 they launched WARDENLIGHT studio in Montpellier.

Matte painting epic scenery

Learn how to use CINEMA 4D and Photoshop to integrate a 3D element seamlessly into an extension matte painting with this step-by-step tutorial [▶](#)



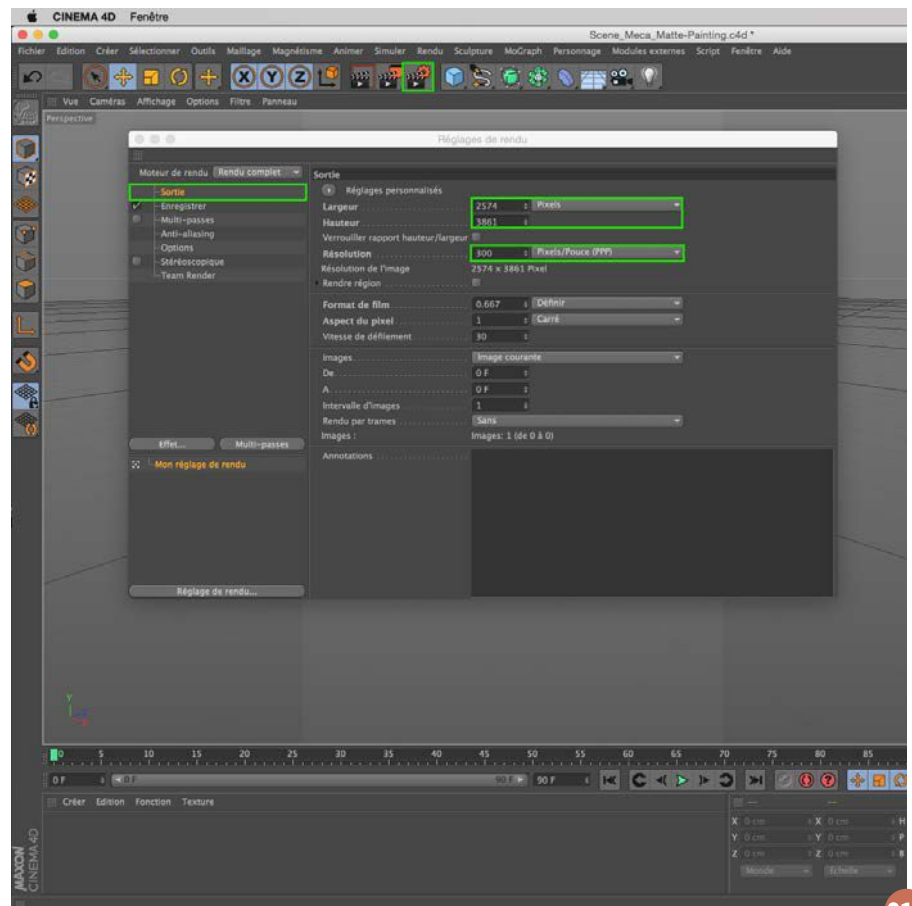
Jessica Rossier shares her pro tips to help you hone your matte painting skills...

In this step-by-step tutorial, I'll show you how to adding a 3D element in a matte painting by using CINEMA 4D and Photoshop. You will learn how to set up a scene in CINEMA 4D to include a background texture, how to import a new 3D element into the scene, and then create a good mood to fit and totally integrate it with the background.

You will learn how to make the right rendering with some relevant additional steps. How to integrate the 3D element in the matte painting with Photoshop techniques — layer's mask, painting brush and some photo-manipulation tricks. Then finally, how to blend the 3D elements into the final result with some color corrections. In order to do this tutorial, you need CINEMA 4D (you can download a free trial here: www.maxon.net/en/products/demo-version/download-form.html); Photoshop (at least from CS6 version) and if it's possible a Wacom Tablet.

01 Setup of the scene in CINEMA 4D: To start, I configure the size of my scene so that it is similar to my main image. To do this I go to Render Settings > Output > and I put the same dimensions and resolution as the scene.

After, I add my background for a perspective reference and the positioning of my future object, which I create in CINEMA 4D. So, I create an object



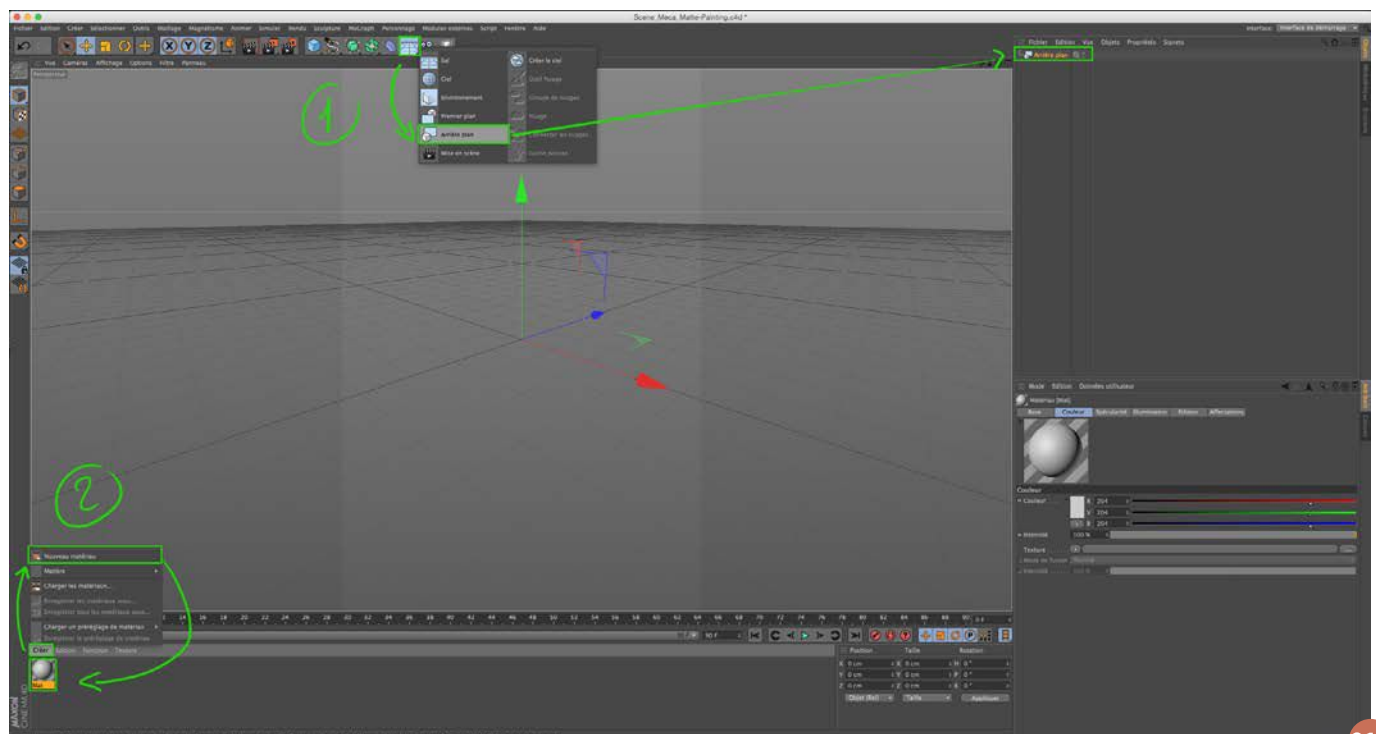
01a

Background that will appear in my objects' window (to the right) as a kind of layer.

02 Texturing the object: Then in the texture's menu (in the bottom-left of the timeline) I create a New Material, which I will use it to apply a texture to my background object. ▶

01a The configuration of the scene in CINEMA 4D

01b Creating the material of the background



01b

Now, I double-click on my new material which will open the material editor menu. Then, I check the Luminance option and I load my texture (Tutorial_matte_painting_Adding_Element_Jessica_Rossier.jpg). Next I drag and drop my material onto my background object. I must now adjust my CINEMA 4D's horizon line to my background using the scene management tools.

03 Adding the main element: Now that my horizon is in the right place, I add my main element. I go to File > Merge > Meca-Wheel.c4d and open it. This is an asset I have created myself, but you can use software such as SketchUp or Blender to create your own (they even have a library of pre-made assets ready for import) or you can use sites such as 3dwarehouse.sketchup.com to obtain 3D elements for your scene.

Once open in my scene, I use the object manipulation's tools to adjust the scale, rotation and the placement of my element. ▶

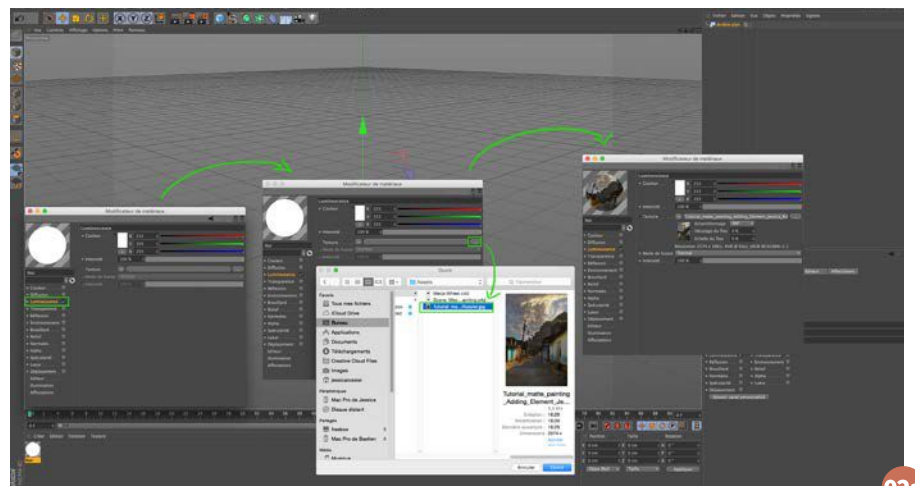
02a Adding the texture onto the new material

02b Drag and dropping the material onto the background

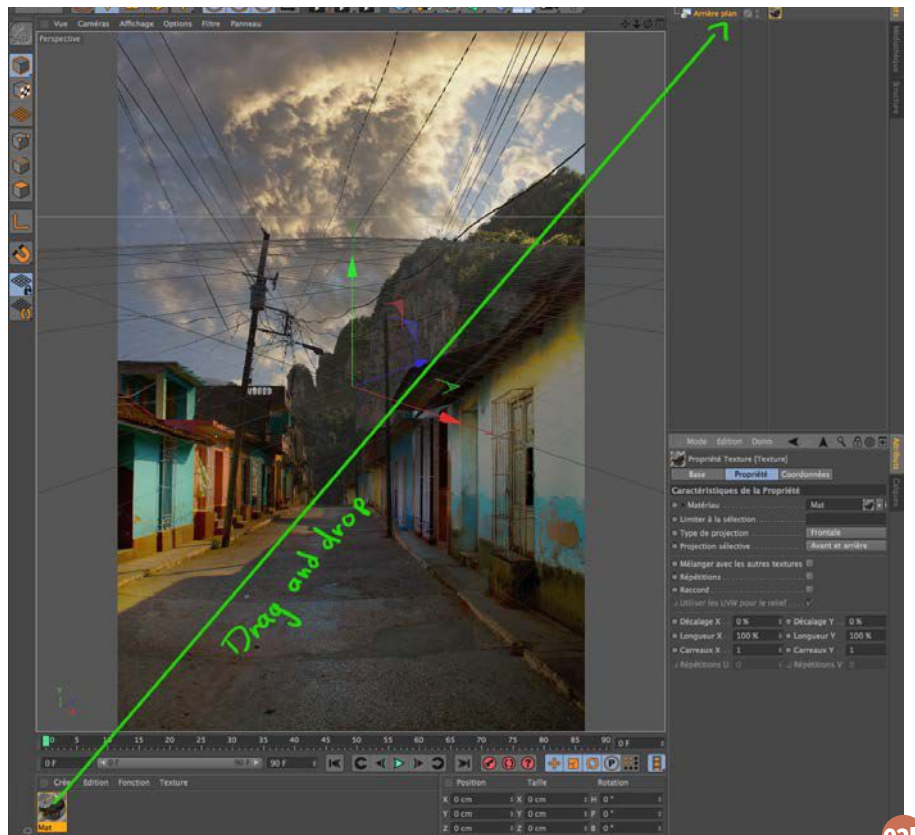
02c Adjusting the CINEMA 4D horizon

03a Import the main element into the scene

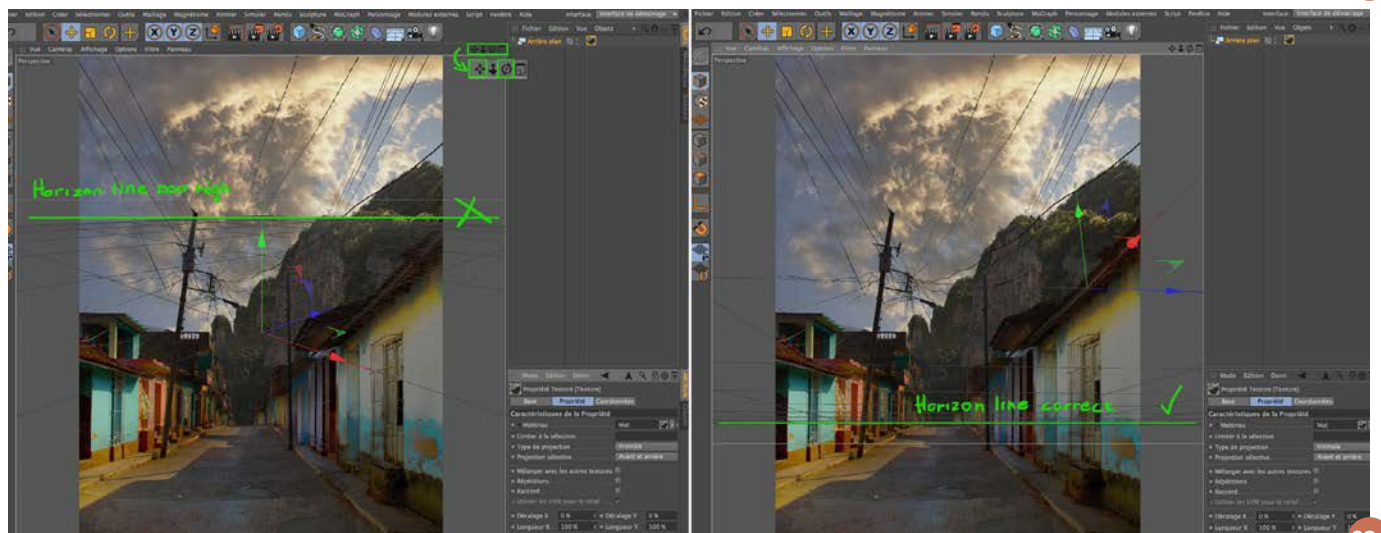
03b Reposition the object using the manipulation tools



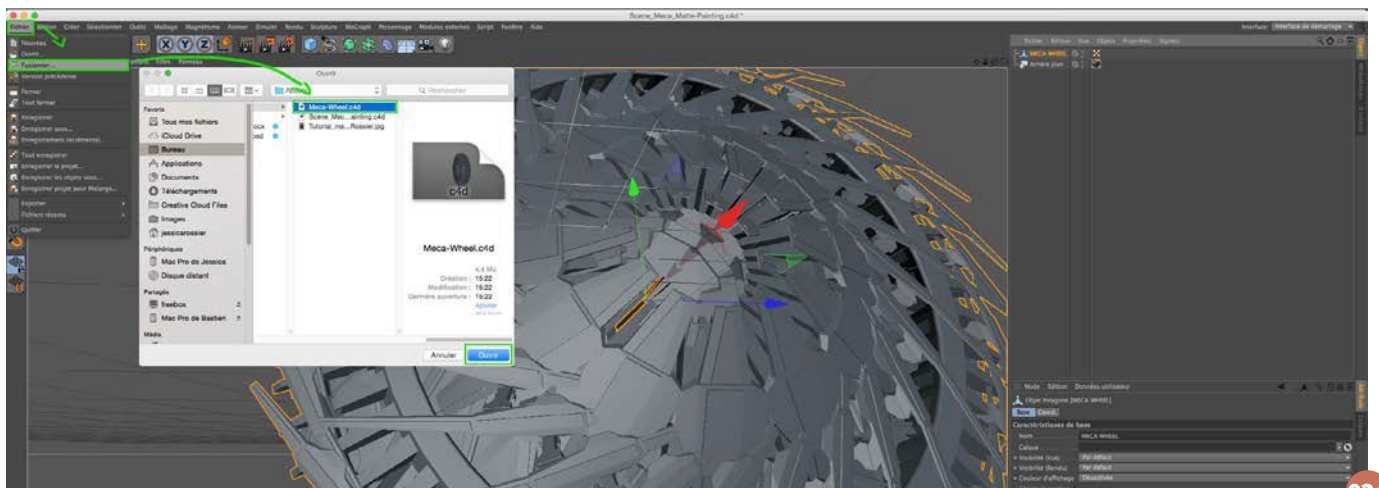
02a



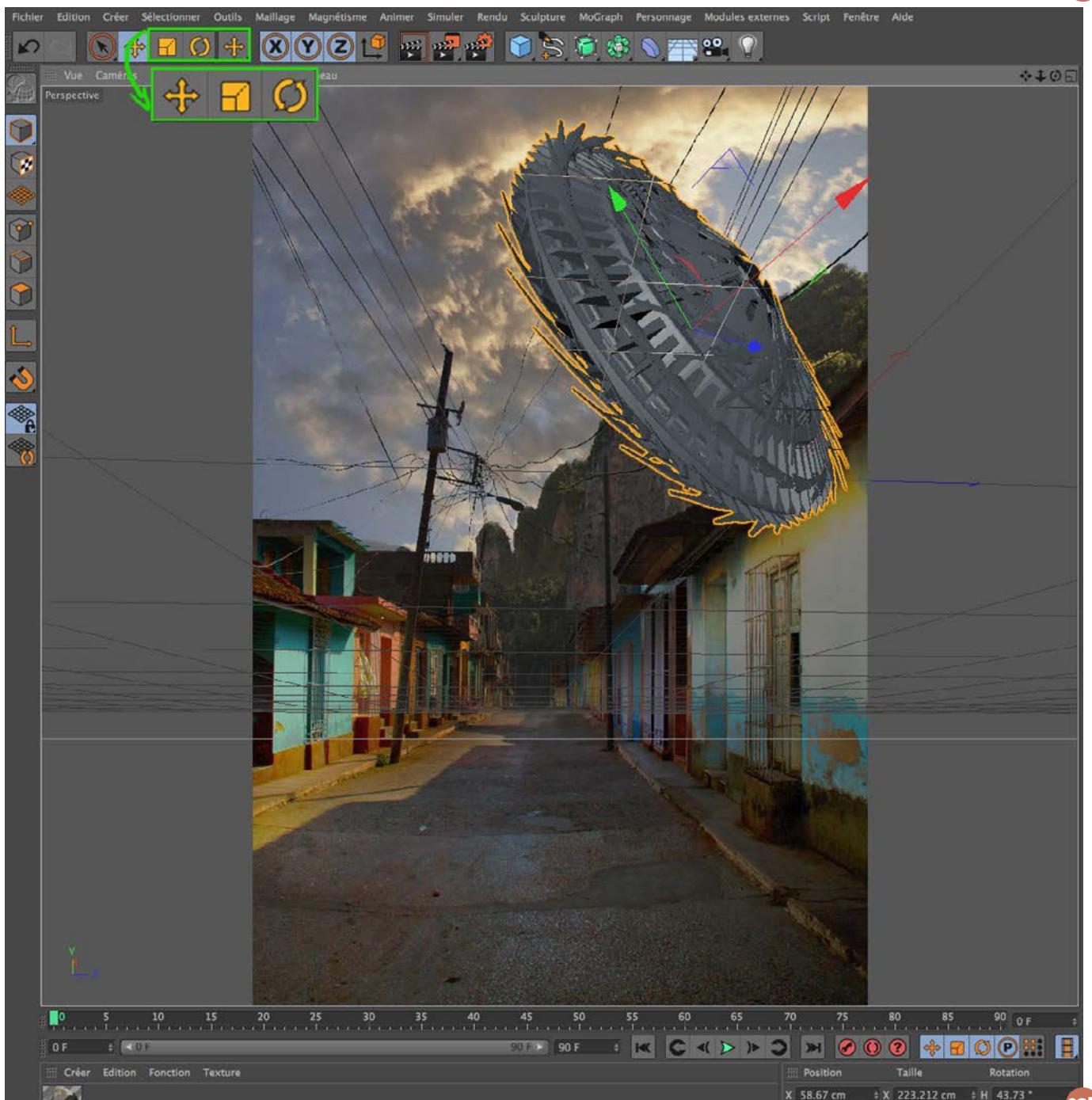
02b



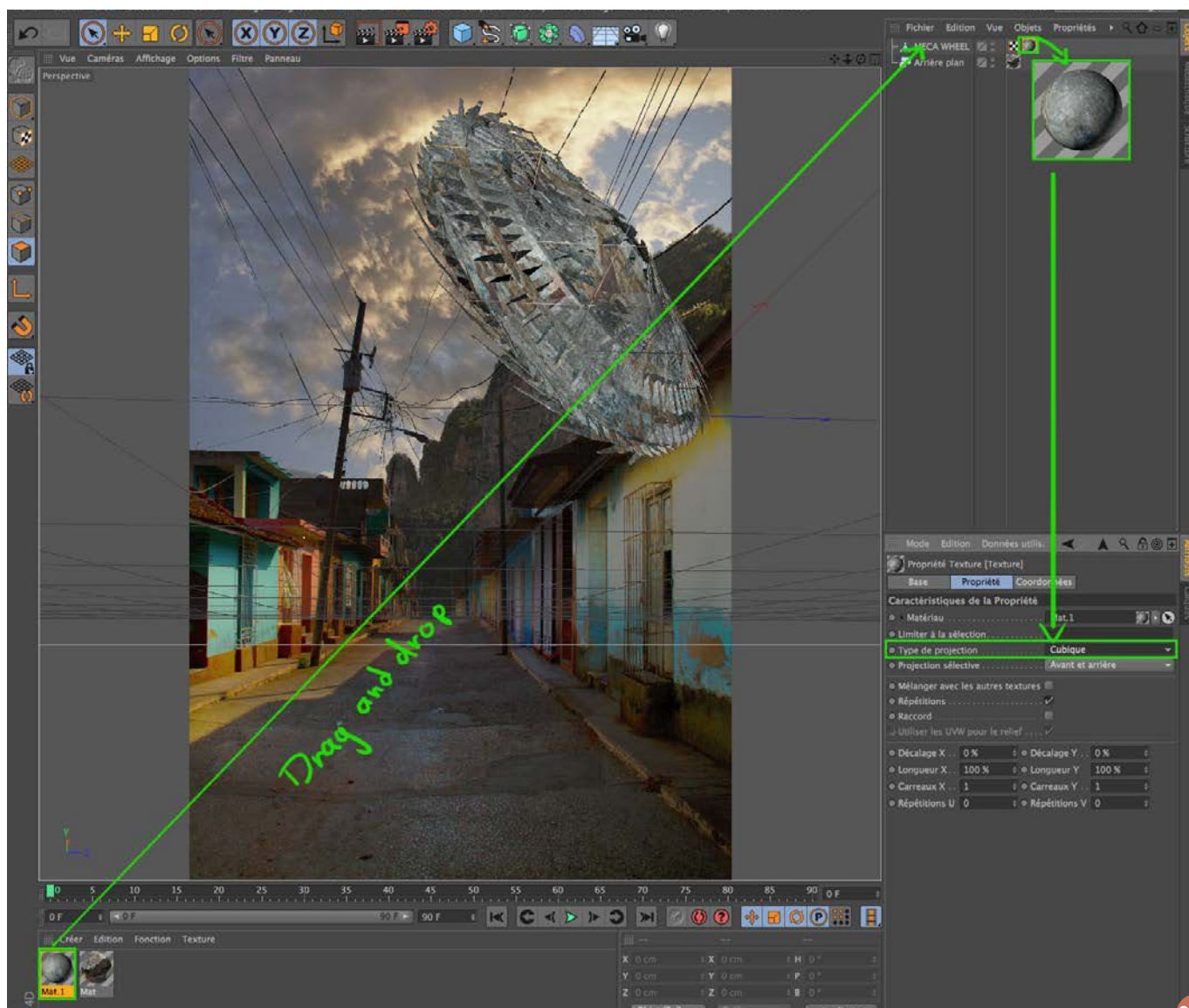
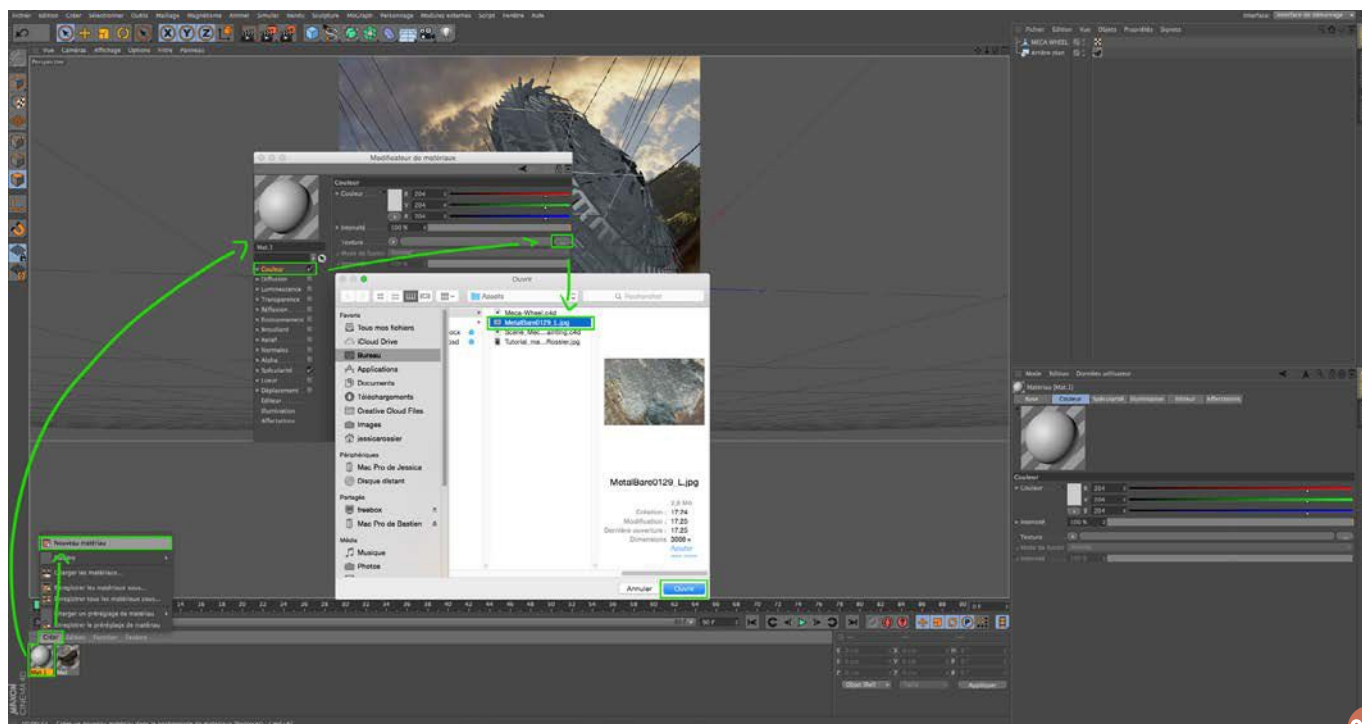
02c



03a



03b



04 Creating a new texture: After obtaining a good position, I create a new texture (with new material) that I'll add to my element MECA WHEEL.

Then I go into the Color menu and I load the texture MetalBare0129_L.jpg. Then I drag and drop my material on to the MECA WHEEL element (in the Objects window). After applying the texture, go to Attributes > Tag > Projection and check the cubic mode, so that the texture is now more homogeneous.

05 Creating the right ambiance on the MECA WHEEL: Now I will create the mood on my MECA WHEEL, which is similar to my background to create a better integration of the 3D element. To do that, I create an object Light that will simulate the sun.

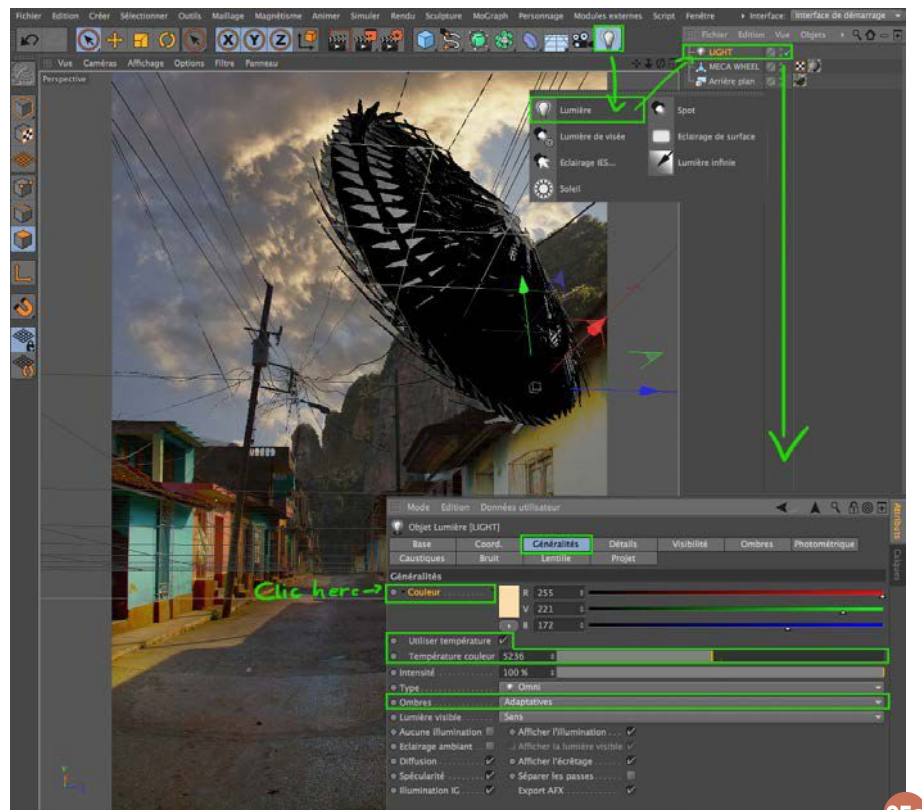
As the Light is created, I will adjust the color and also add a shadow. I go to Attributes > General > (click on) Color > (click on) Use Temperature. Then I set up the temperature so that it matches the light on the background's image. Then I apply a Shadow area.

I position the Light correctly in my scene with the positioning tools in order to create the shadow. To help me find the right place, I use the four views of my scene.

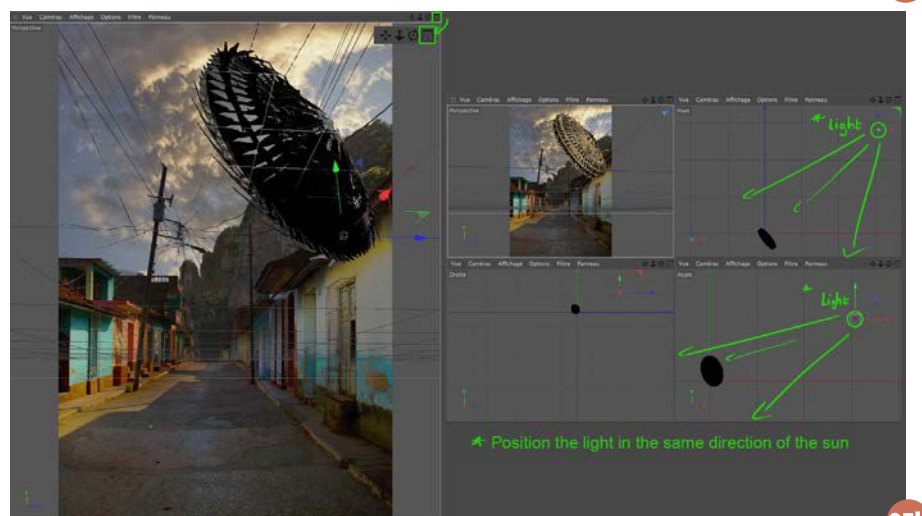
Then to create a better atmosphere — and more realistic — I add an object Physical Sky with the attributes Time and Place. I indicate the month and time (July — 20:26:00), which seems to match the best to the background.

06 Setup the render of the scene: Now I have achieved the right mood on the 3D asset, I move on to set up the render of the scene.

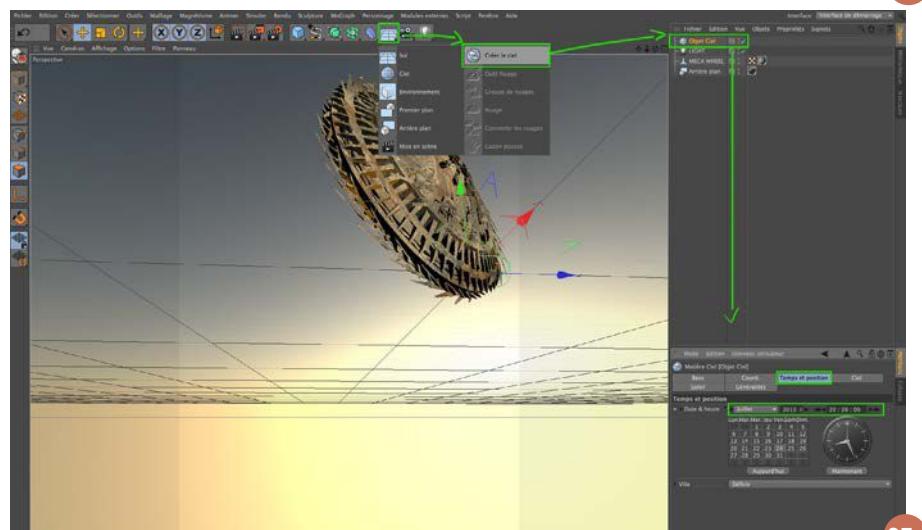
First, I indicate where I put the file. For the final file I specify TIFF (PSD Layers) and I check Alpha Channel to separate my MECA WHEEL from the background. Using an Anti-Aliasing filter is best. ▶



05a



05b



05c

04a Adding the new material texture for the MECA WHEEL

04b Drag and drop the material texture on the MECA WHEEL

05a Adding the light

05b Positioning the light in the viewer

05c Adding the sky for the ambiance

Add Ambient Occlusion > Color > turn the black into gray. Then add Global Illumination > General > Gamma > 1.6.

My scene is now ready for the optimum rendering. To make sure the end result will look correct, I do a Render View in the render window. If I like it, I launch the final rendering. I click on Render to Picture Viewer which will create my TIFF file.

“To create an interesting matte painting, you have to give it a background story”

07 Adding the element MECA WHEEL: Once the 3D rendering is done, I open the TIFF file in Photoshop and select my wheel without the background.

First I unlock the layer then I go into the channel and I select the Alpha layer. I make a selection by pressing the little circle at the bottom of the panel. Then I go back to the Layers panel (click the main layer), I invert the selection and press the Delete key to erase the background.

Now I take my matte painting (that was created in the first tutorial, Simple Set Extension) and I import the wheel into the scene.

To integrate the element properly, I need to create a smooth edge. So I select the wheel and contract the selection of 1 pixel. Then I feather it by 0.5 pixels, invert the selection and press Delete. This achieves a smoother outline to the element.

08 Integrating the element into the mountain: If you're willing to create an interesting matte painting, you have to give it a background story, of what might have happened. For this matte painting, the idea here is that a long time ago an alien spaceship crashed here. A piece of this spaceship has been stuck in the near mountain since then. ▶

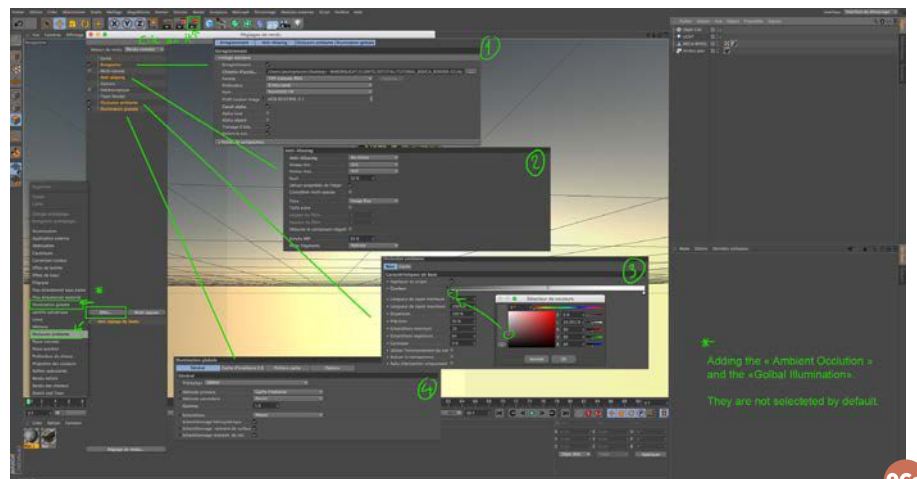
06a Setup of the render view

06b Preview of the scene

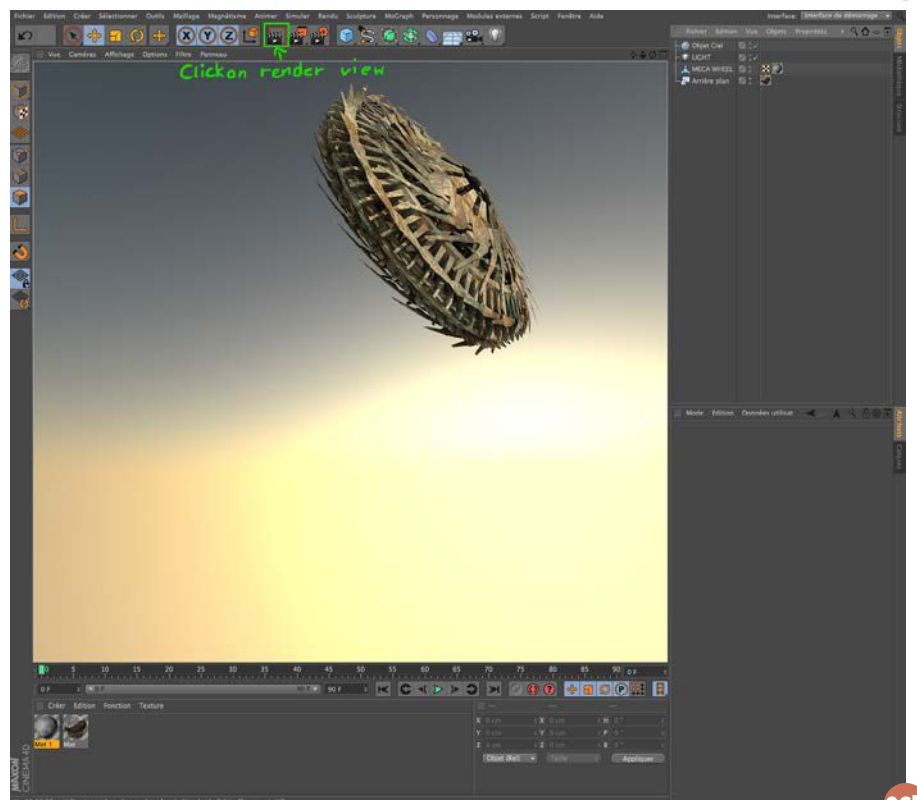
06c Start the final render

07a Selecting the element without the background

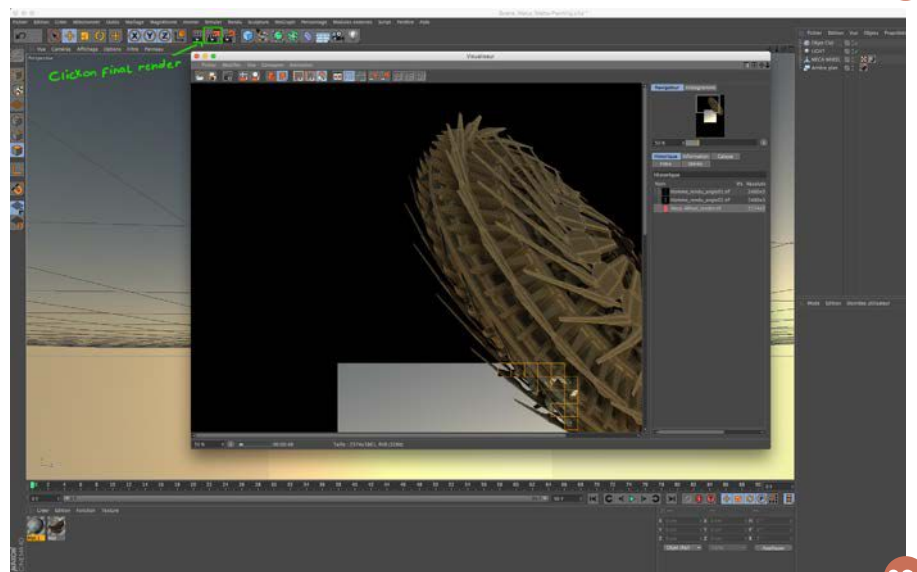
07b Creating the first basic integration of the element in the matte painting



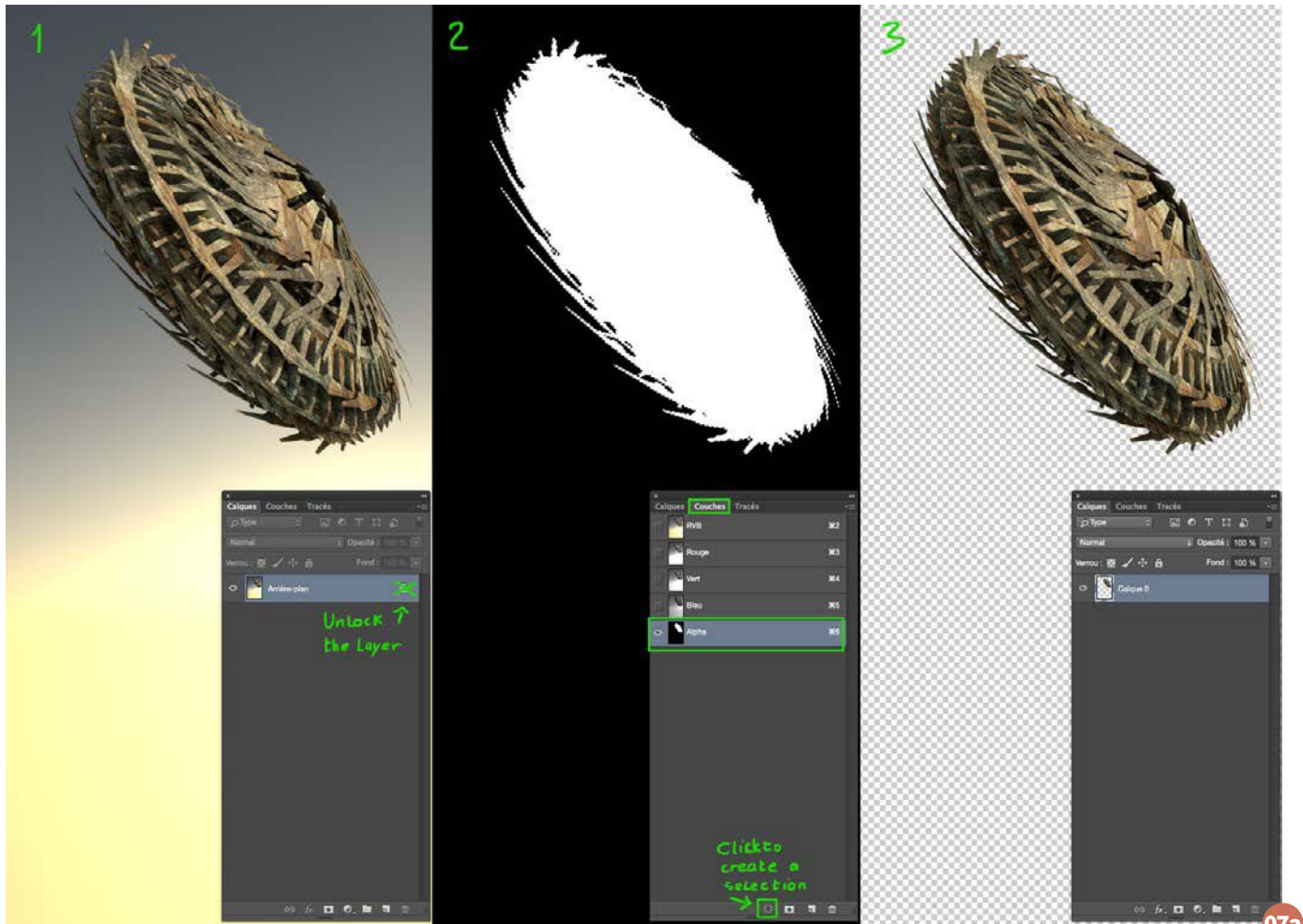
06a



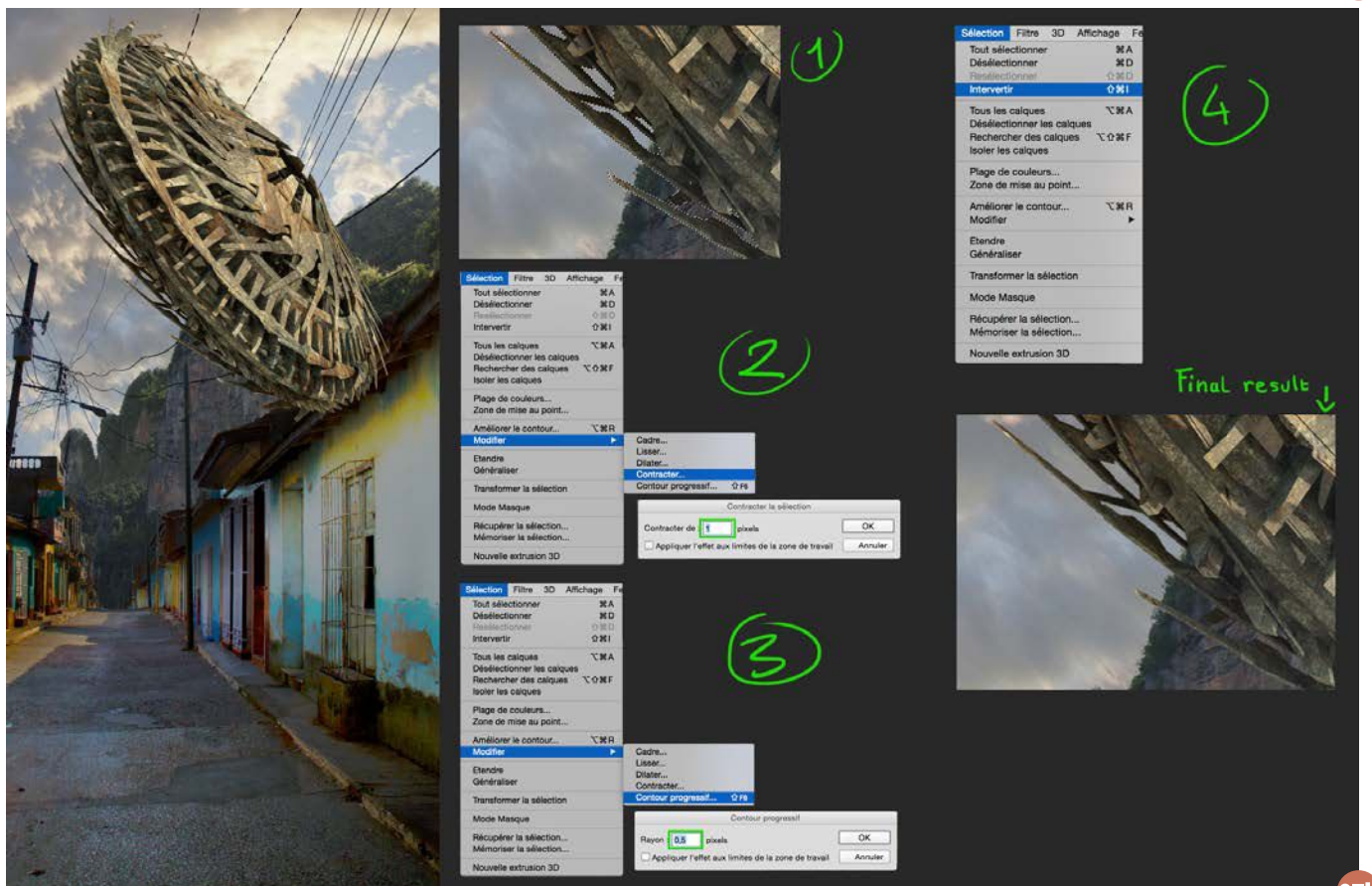
06b



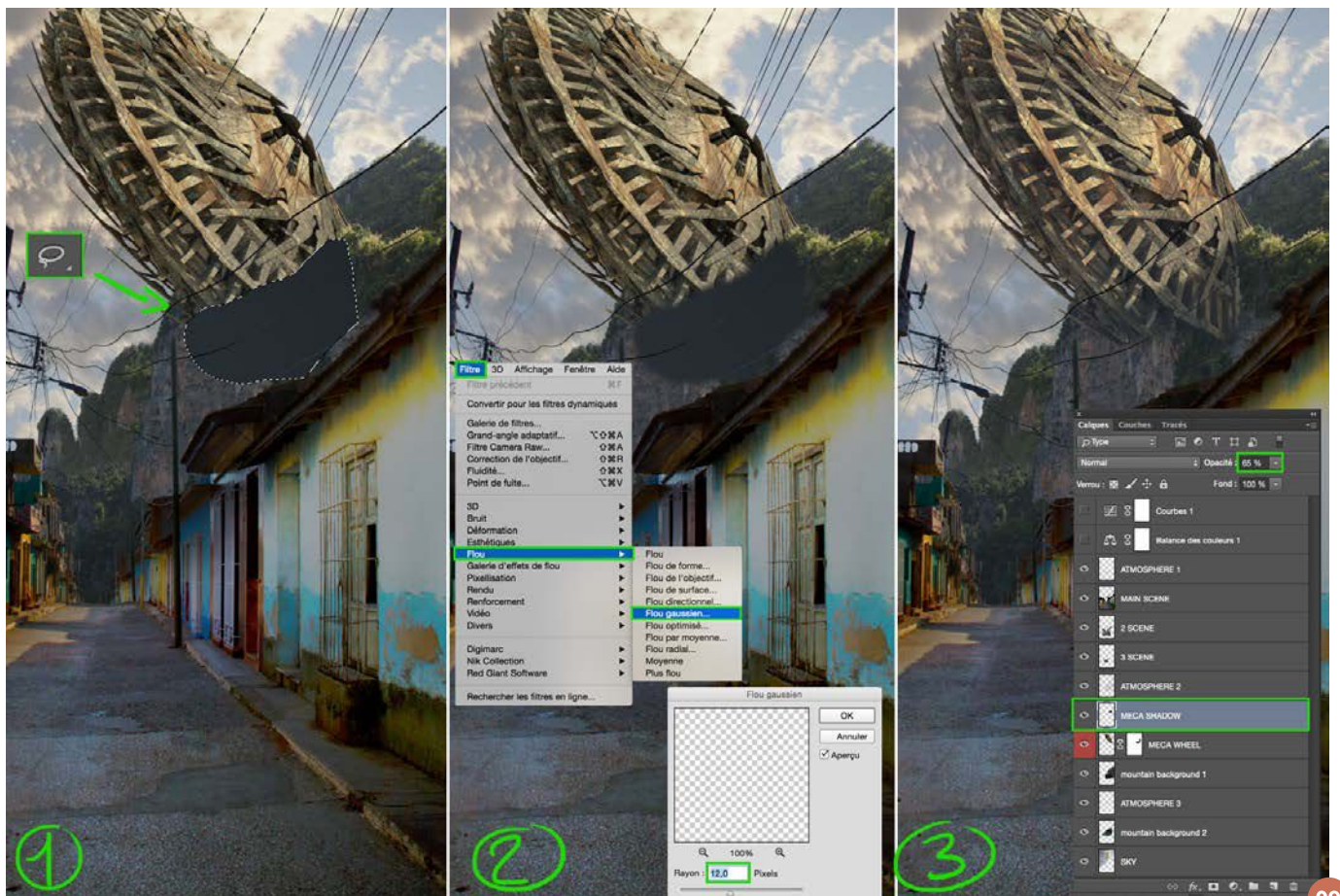
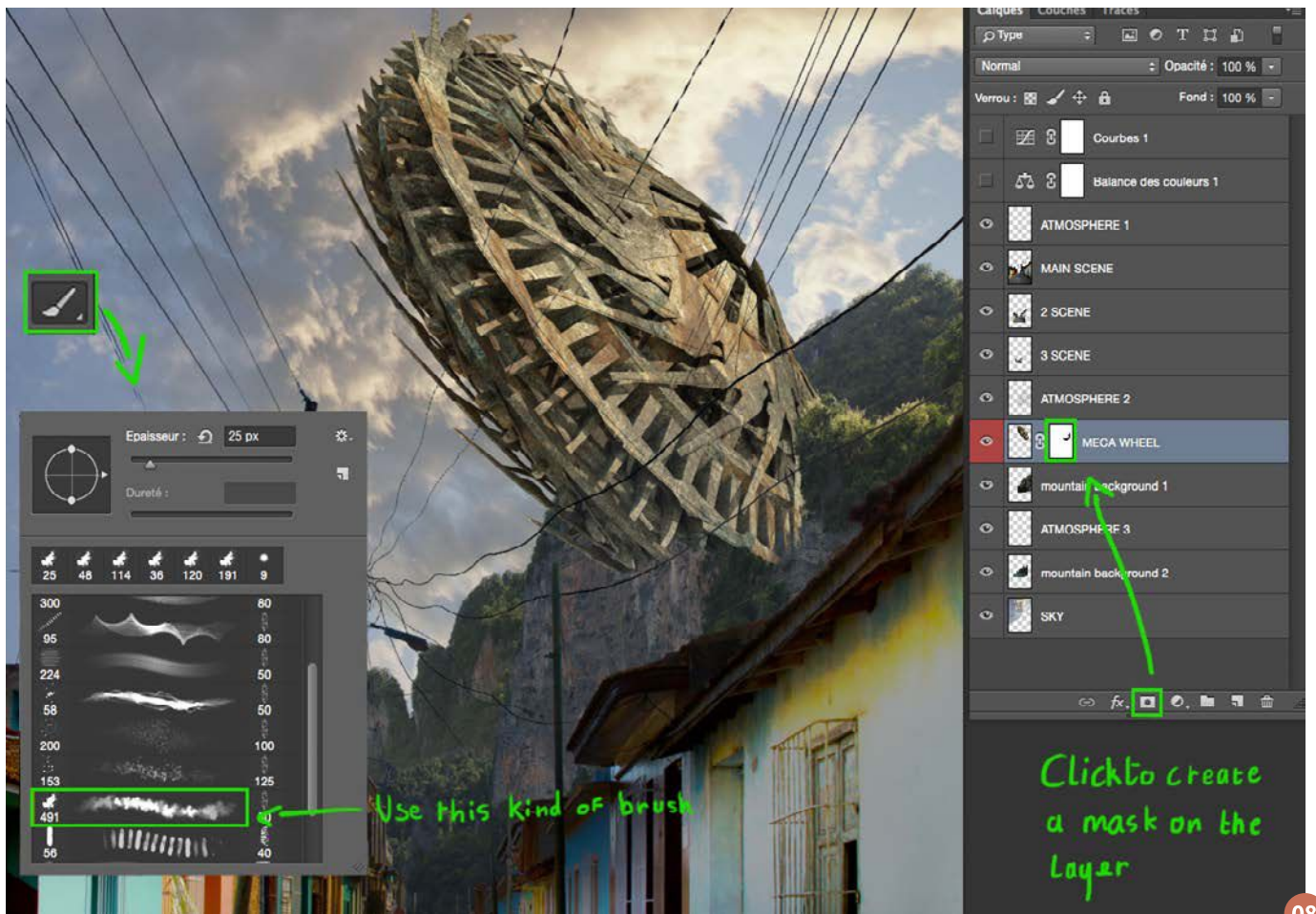
06c

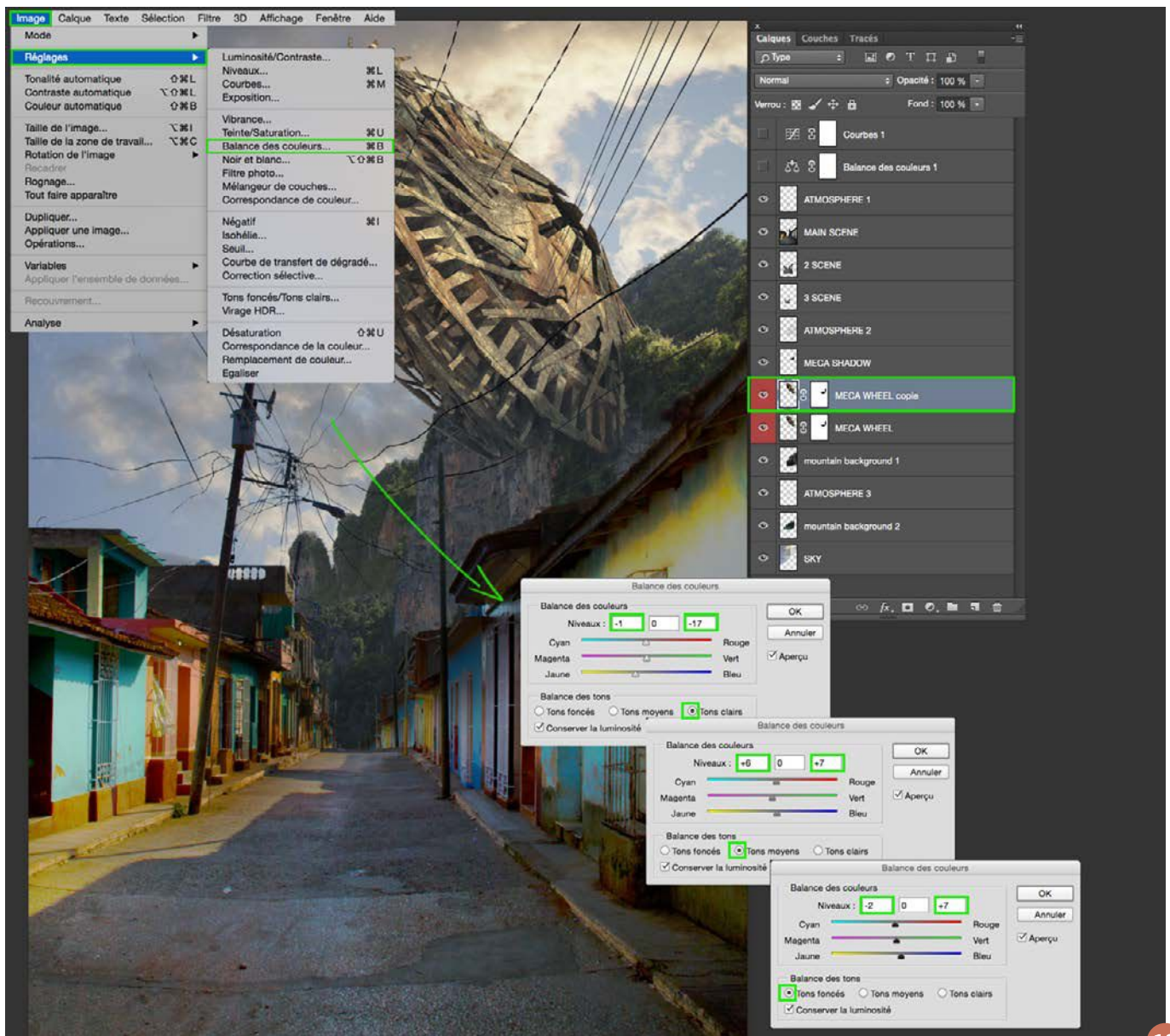


07a



07b





10

So we have to integrate the wheel into the mountains. At the beginning, I put my layer MECA WHEEL above my mountains and below my ATMOSPHERE 2 Layer.

I create a mask on my MECA WHEEL layer. I then take my Paintbrush tool; I choose a smoky brush shape. I take the black color and I paint in a mask to erase pieces of my wheel to begin to integrate it into the mountain.

09 Creating the shadow of the element: Once the integration of the wheel in the mountains is done, I create a shadow to remove the floating impression of the 3D element.

To do that, I create a new layer that I place above the MECA WHEEL layer. I use the Lasso tool's technique to create an abstract form — that I put at the bottom — and I fill it with dark gray using the Paint Bucket tool. Then I create a Gaussian

Blur on my form by going to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur (around 12.0 pixels), which give us a rather nice diffuse shadow.

As soon as my shadow looks right, I reduce the opacity to obtain the same intensity as the shaded part of the mountainside.

10 Color management: In the integration process of a 3D element in a matte painting, the color management is a very important aspect to remember. This can bring the touch of realism we want. So to change the colors of the 3D element, I duplicate the MECA WHEEL layer to have a backup of my layer and work on a copy.

I go to Adjustments > Color Balance where I change the shades between the highlights, mid tones and shadows, to make sure it matches with the surrounding environment.

11 Adding details: The texture remains rough on the 3D render, and the look of the wheel gives us an impression of a 3D computer design. In this step I will show how to make the texture more detailed by using images that add realism. To do that I import a mountain photo similar to the background into my matte painting (you can find free photo texture on sites such as www.freetextures.3dtotal.com and www.cgtextures.com). ▶

08 Using the Paintbrush tool and Layer Mask to insert the wheel into the mountain

09 Using the Lasso tool to create the shadow

10 Use the Color Balance adjustment to integrate the colors

I place the photo above the MECA SHADOW layer. I select the wheel's shape then I go on the Tex mountain layer. I create a mask that will take the exact shape of the wheel. The mask is very convenient because it helps keep the whole picture in view, so I can move the images inside the mask to find the angle of the texture that I like.

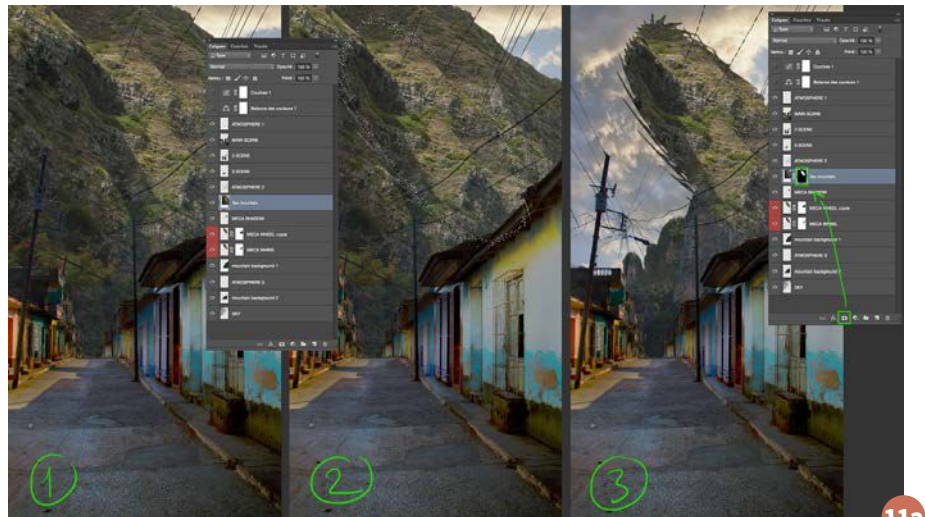
Once the texture has been placed correctly, I lower my layer's opacity to 70% to reduce its intensity. I double-click on the Tex mountain layer to open the Layer Style window to move the gray levels, so that it makes the dark areas of the wheel appear from below.

As soon as I have achieved the integration effect that I want, I press OK. I take my Paintbrush tool – I choose the smoky brush again – and paint with black inside the mask to erase some textured areas. Once this is done the wheel looks more realistic. It gives the impression of having aged as the vegetation has grown on it.

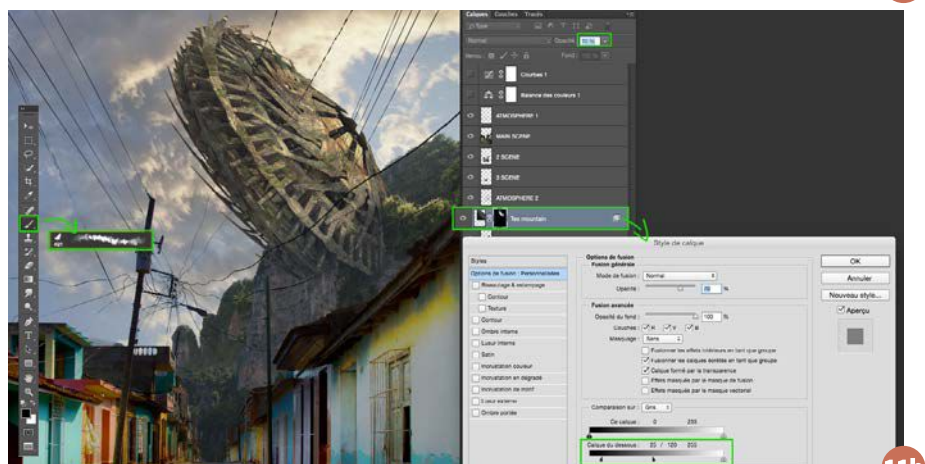
12 **Finishing touches:** For this last step, I add details on the 3D element by adding more vegetation. I take another photo and I open it in Photoshop. With the Rectangular Marquee tool I select a vegetation area that I will import into my matte painting.

I put my new vegetation layer above the Tex mountain layer. Now I put the vegetation selection on the wheel. I use the Warp tool to distort the selection as I want, and then I enter the transformation.

I take the Eraser tool with the smoky brush shape to erase areas of the vegetation. Here we are at the end of the tutorial and the 3D element is seamlessly integrated into the scene. ●



11a

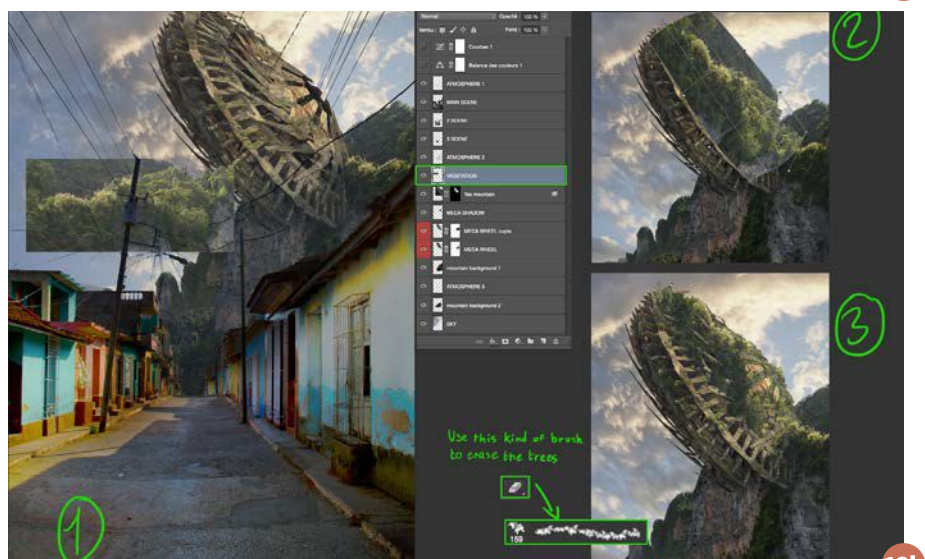


11b



12a

- 11a** Adding the texture to the 3D element
- 11b** Using techniques to integrate the photo texture
- 12a** Using a vegetation photo texture
- 12b** Final adjustments to the photo texture



12b

The Artist



Jessica Rossier
jess-studio.com



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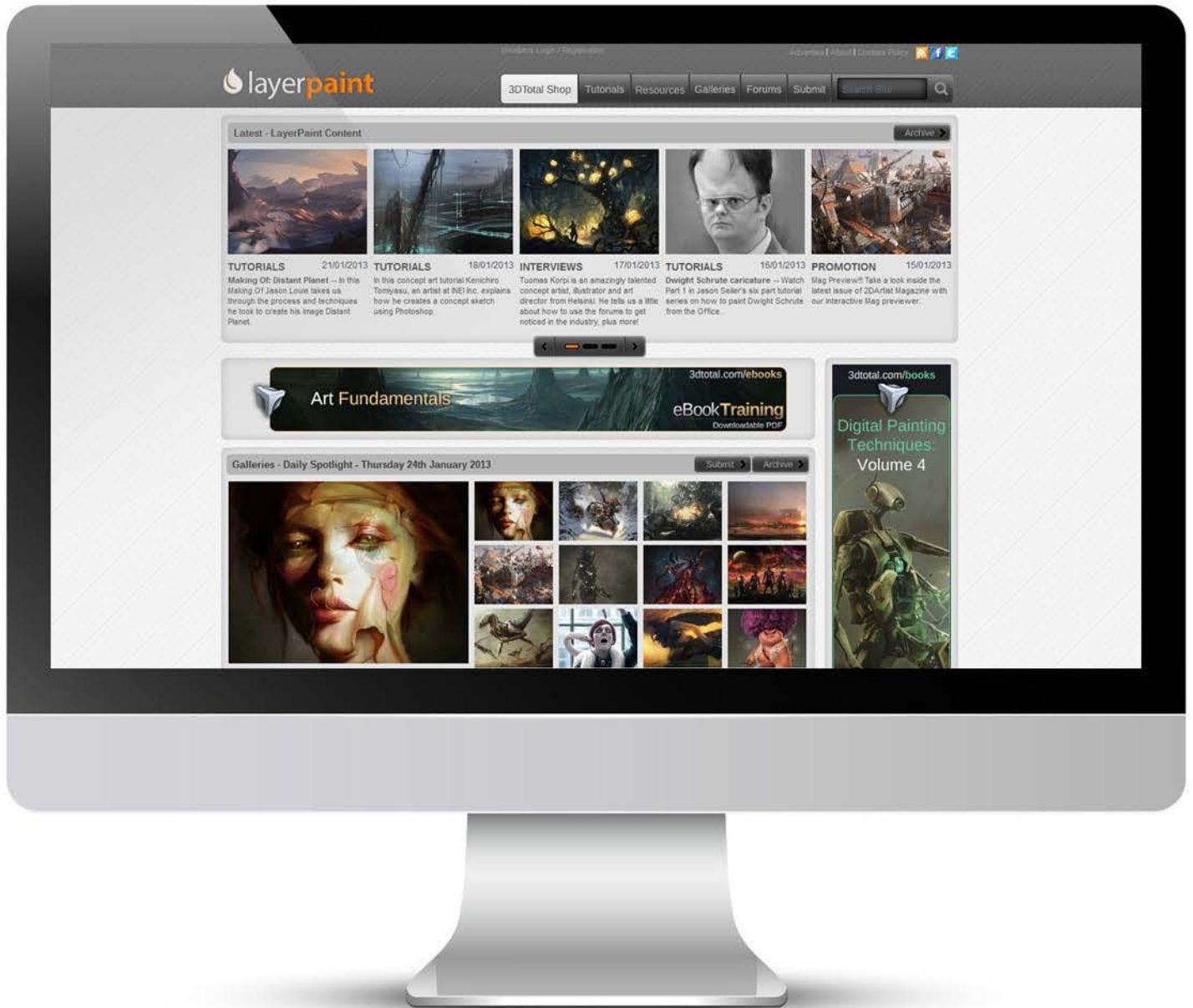
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The Artist



Brun Croes
bruncroes.com

Brun Croes is a freelance illustrator working in the animation, games and entertainment industry. He's been active as a professional for four years focusing mainly on visual development.



Draw a group of creatures

Brun Croes divulges his step-by-step process to design and draw a group of creatures from your imagination, from exploring fun designs to simplifying the process of getting your ideas down on paper! ▶

Brun Croes reveals his process for designing a group of characterful creatures...

Now that we've figured out how our character will look (chapter 1, issue 112) it's time for us to take a look at his captors – the alien creatures that are enslaving our main character. As with the previous chapter we will try to come up with some fun designs and figure out how our creatures will look, and how to simplify the process of putting them down on paper.

Meet our main character's captors. Notice the contrast between their actions and how they look. I imagine them using their cute looks as a smart and cunning way to lure their prey

Giving our creatures a range of different emotions helps to make them more believable. This way we can sense that these creatures are smart or at the very least more so than animals, who don't tend to have many different facial emotions

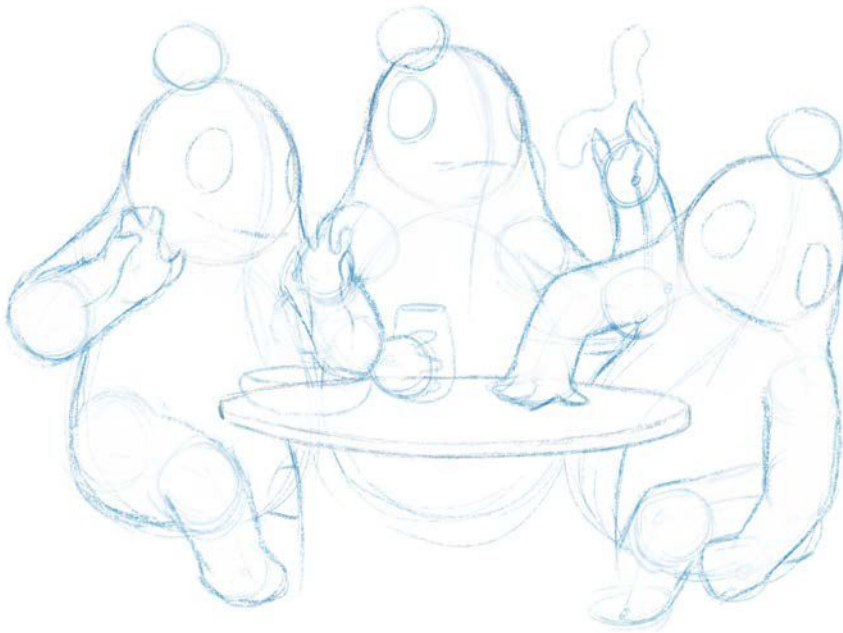


Giving props or relatable items to your character/creatures will help to tell us more about them. Here we see the creatures eating big live worms. This does a few things for us, first it helps us tell that these creatures might be fish-like (which was already somewhat present in their design) and it helps us gross out a bit about their eating habits; further adding to their character

Try to incorporate some action in your creature's handling that suggest something about their personality. Here one of our creatures is yelling something angry (yet humorous to him) at our main character, giving us more insight into the character of our creatures

Pose

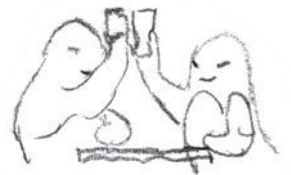
I chose to have the creatures grouped together to make them more intimidating, and setting them higher than the character indicates who has the power in the situation.



- Try different sizes, positions, and expressions by looking at how simple you can draw them without adding detail. Focus on gestures that tell something



- To get some ideas going I return to drawing thumbnail sized gestures to explore



- Keep your focus on quickly representing a pose or basic idea to see if it would work or not



- These small drawings are often far from pretty, but to my experience they tend to be some of the most fun part of the process when making an illustration. Remember to have fun with these and don't rush them, make at least a few before committing to one of them



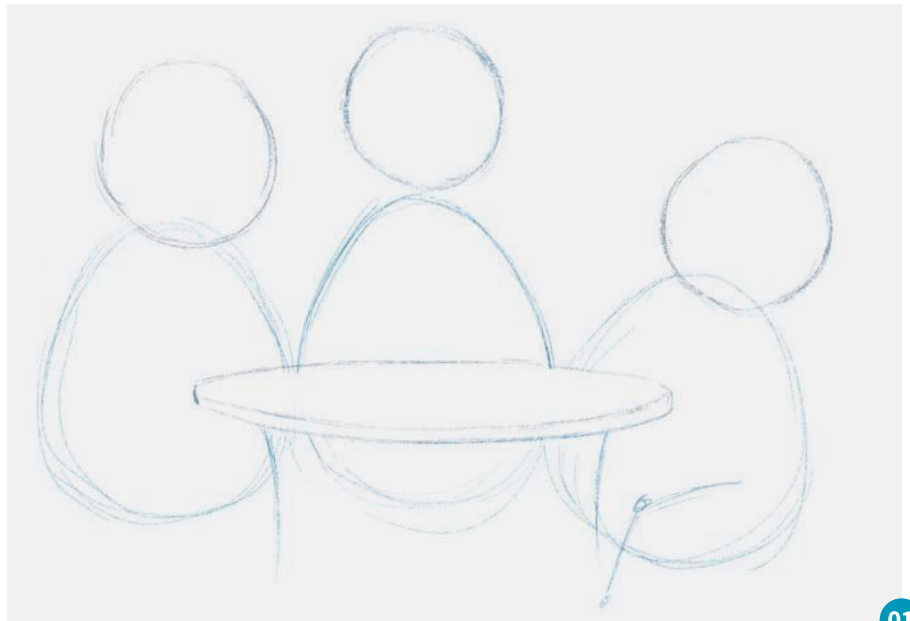
- Don't focus too much on getting things right, anatomy or details are absolutely unnecessary at this stage, although it's a good idea to start thinking a bit about those in the back of your head



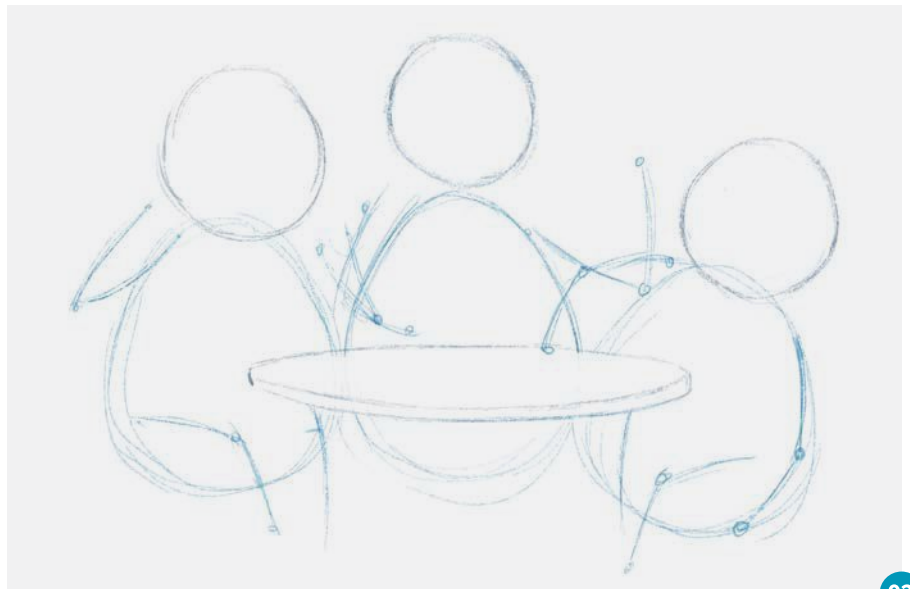
01 Getting started with the pose: As with the character gestures before, I've decided on a gesture for our creatures. I'm going to go with a group of them around a table celebrating something. From here I look back to my gesture drawings and start to imagine how they would look when drawn a bit bigger and clearer. I do this again by imagining the pose as a composition of shapes, adding more as we go to eventually have something that can serve as a blueprint for our final drawing.

02 Head and torso: I imagine these creatures as some kind of sumo wrestlers as far as their appearance goes. So I start out with drawing a circle for the head and an elongated ellipse for the hips and torso. I put them roughly in the position of one of the gestures we drew earlier. I also provide some rough lines for a table, as I know they will be sitting around one. But we'll touch upon that later.

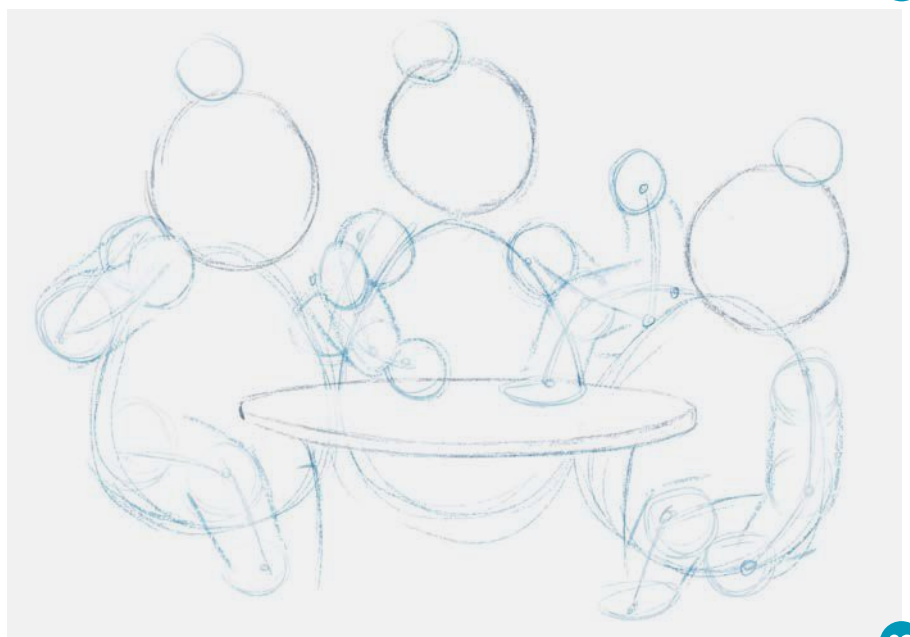
03 Gestural lines: Now that we have the basic shapes of our body on the paper, it's time to add some gestural lines that will represent where and how the arms and legs will be placed and in what position. When drawing these lines try to think about what the creatures are trying to convey with their movement. The creature on the left will be yelling at our main character, the creature in the middle will be holding up some prop and happily looking at it, while our third creature is bending a bit below the table looking at our main character in anger, holding some sort of chain that is connected to our main character. ▶



01



02



03

01 Brun refers again to his blue pencil, using the blue lines as a blueprint to draw upon later on

02 Give thought to your creature's actions as they will help to convey the story

03 Keep your thought process simple, there's no need to add complicated forms just yet. Try to do as much as you can with circles and cylinders

04 Weight issues: With our gesture lines in place we can start to add some thickness and indication of weight to our arms and legs. By using small circles for the joint areas, such as shoulders, elbows, hands and feet, I am able to determine and think of their placement more in a three-dimensional space. I want them to have some sort of hair-do so I decide to give them a small ball of hair on their head. For the moment I represent this by a circle as well.

05 Cleaning up: It's time to clean up some of those lines. I carefully choose which parts of the creatures are overlapping and erase the unnecessary lines with an electric eraser. I add some directional lines around the face area to accentuate the curve of the face and body. I've decided to give the creatures props of drinks, a plate with worms and a worm in hand. I simply indicate where their mouths and eyes will be to help me be more confident about their placement when tracing them later on. ►



04

04 Building up all the parts of the illustration with these simple forms that are mainly circular, helps to give the overall illustration a sense of unity as far as line and form goes

05 Keep the building blocks of the creatures big – this is a result of them feasting most of the time

⚡ PRO TIP Diversity

Throughout building up the blue lines I have been thinking about who these creatures are, focusing on their gestures and what they represent, using arms, hands and body movement to convey their expression without having drawn a single face. It is a good idea to put some thought into your characters, so that their intentions are clear early on. Further detail is just icing on the cake and can be explored later on.

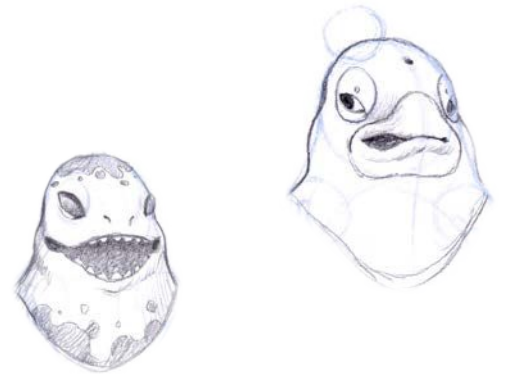


05

Head

Use of shapes is important when it comes to the face and expression. I have given the creatures human-like eyes to portray intelligence and emotion. Shapes also help with indicating form, so I have used round shapes to render the head tying in with the creature's round body shape.

- Keep in mind that this is an exploration-based part of your process, no need to overcomplicate things. Keep it simple and avoid focusing too much on rendering



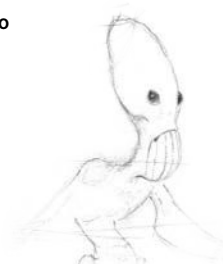
- Experiment with things like small mouths vs. big mouths or small eyes vs. big eyes, and look at how this impacts your creature's character and attitude

- Experiment with different expressions to see which would fit best with the creature's character. I find it helps to act out the expression you're trying to draw. Don't be afraid of using a small mirror



- Try different types of creatures, dare yourself to step away from your idea and try something new. Don't feel like you should be chained to the template lines

- Experiment with spots, stripes, blobs or other animal-like patterns to enhance your creature. Look at examples of animals in nature to get some inspiration





01

01 Building up our creature's face: As with our main character in the previous chapter, we will build further upon our template. I draw in my lines using the blue pencil before I go into more detail rendering the creature. Take your time to focus on putting down those first guidelines just right. With the head I add shapes for the eyes and mouth area. Notice how the creature's face is turned into a 3/4 position, making the eye socket of his left eye turn slightly around the skull. This results in a somewhat smaller elliptical shape compared to his right eye shape. I apply the same thought process to the mouth features, thinking about how they would curve along the creature's face.



02

02 Taking it a step further: With my blue lines in place we can start working in more details. Inside the eye shapes I add another pair of smaller elliptical shapes that get pointy towards their beginning and end; they will represent the eye balls. I keep the bigger eye shapes I drew earlier and make them part of the creature's skin appearance. For the mouth I start to focus a bit more on how I want it to look. We can add sharp teeth but I think that might be a bit too much of a cliché. I want to exaggerate their cuteness a bit, so I'm going to represent the teeth in a more stylized way, making them up from wavelike shapes instead of sharp pointy ones.

03 More definition: Along the way I've added vertical lines across his belly up to his mouth. This idea came to me when thinking of how the bellies of whales look. These small details help to add to your creature's believability and appearance. On top of that it is aesthetically pleasing to look at, and it's a design element that I will repeat throughout the complete



03

illustration to further maintain some sense of unity. It's also a good time to start enhancing and darkening some places. I'm pretty satisfied with the creature's outlines so I darken them a bit. The mouth is obviously going to be dark inside, so I make it darker towards the top.

04 More shading: It's a bit tedious getting to this point of any drawing; rendering is essentially a straightforward process which might feel less creative than the initial design stages of an illustration. That being said it's a great feeling to see your drawing come to life thanks to your rendering. Right now I'm focusing on finding the right places to put the shadows. I put some more shadow underneath the creature's mouth,

insinuating that the jaw is sticking out a bit more. Notice how his face is just a collection of roundish features, making it easy to figure out how the lighting would fall.

05 Finishing up: It's time to take a close look at our creature's head and determine what could use a bit more work, where to put a bit more contrast and where to enhance some outlines. I put some more detail into the eyes as well; I chose not to draw special or weird eyes because I feel like adding normal more human-like eyes adds to their intelligence. I push the contrast around the eye sockets and the mouth area with darker lines to really accentuate the curvature of the creature's face. ►



04



05

01 Don't feel like you should get everything right from the get go, feel free to redraw things until you get them just right

02 Use an eraser to remove the blue lines until they are barely visible before starting on your graphite pencil drawing

03 While shading, make your lines follow the form of the object, and the direction the light is coming from. This will help to make the light and shadow flow around your illustration

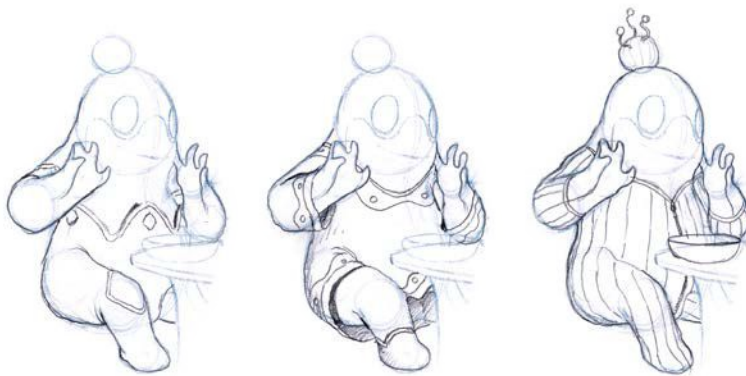
04 Keep the brightest spot of the creature above his mouth and between his eyes, drawing attention to his facial features

05 For the darkest parts of the drawings, grab a 2B mechanical pencil, but if that's not dark enough, use a Staedtler pigment liner to accentuate some extra dark parts



Adding clothing

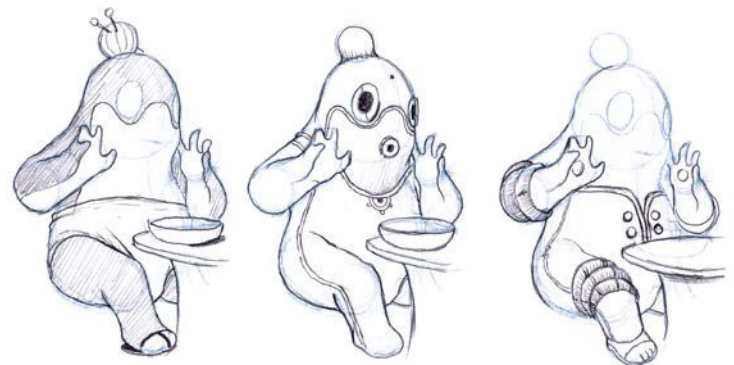
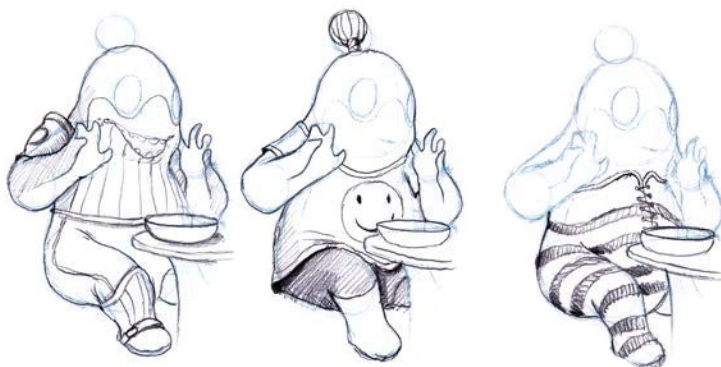
The direction of lines help to focus the viewer's attention to a specific area, in this case the face. Repeat patterns also help to reinforce this idea, so I used repeat patterns from the face on the costume.



- Roughly following our blue lines will give us a sense of where we're going, giving us room to experiment with different design choices

- Keep your focus on variety. Sometimes you need to draw a bad design to know it won't work. So every try is a good try!

- I imagine our creatures having a simplistic overall clothing design to compliment their simplistic bodies. Something that's easy to get in to and out of



- Go off topic now and then and explore different options, at one point I was playing around with the idea of the creatures being some kinds of living dolls or sumo wrestlers

- Experiment with different types of clothing and how they tell a story. Do you want loose cloth, skintight suits or armor? When making these choices, think about what they say about the character



01 Building up our creature's clothing and body design: Once more it's time to grab our blue pencil and focus on getting the right lines down first, or at the very least a suggestion of those lines. I've decided that our creature's uniform should not take too much attention away from the creatures themselves and their actions. So I base my lines on one of the simpler exploration designs we made earlier. I place blue lines along the curvature of the creature's belly, indicating where their clothes will begin and end. In my imagination these clothes are some form of skin tight trousers. Notice how the curvature of the belly-line of the trousers resembles the curvature of their head and mouths. This is a form of shape language and another example of repeating shapes throughout your design to maintain a feeling of unity that connects everything in your drawing.



01

02 Move around the image: Now that I have my template and guidelines ready, I dive completely into rendering my characters. I like to keep focus on my drawing by moving between different parts, leaving some parts in outlines and others more rendered. It's a good idea not to focus on just one part of your drawing.

When you see different parts of your drawing evolve simultaneously you get a better grip on how everything will work together. You don't want to draw something and render it really beautiful only to discover later on that it clashes with another part of your render and you have to redo it all over again. So try to keep your focuses divided over the complete drawing. ►

- 01 Give some indication of the props they will be holding or relating to, enhancing their actions and feeding the story**
- 02 Focus on the head first when rendering, even when moving around the image – it helps you to understand and relate to your character**



02



03

03 Building up form: Throughout my rendering process I keep thinking about gradients as a way of giving form to my creatures. Points closest to my light source will remain nearly white while everything curving away from my light source will be shaded darker. My render mark-making mostly follows the curvature of the forms it is placed upon, in the same direction as the light goes. This helps to accentuate the form of objects and shapes. Every now and then I break up that way of rendering by filling in large parts with random mark-making to deliver some subtle underlying contrast in texture.

04 Thoughts on mark-making: I talked in the previous step about the direction of mark-making and the contrast between using it and not using it. As more of a guideline I tend to use directional mark-making in the places where I want the eye to focus on, and where I want

⚡ PRO TIP

Tissue paper and its many uses!

Use a piece of tissue paper to smudge and blend your shading, as you can see here mostly on the right character's arm and head. It helps to soften the gradient of the shading and takes away some of the white in a subtle way, further enhancing form and texture.

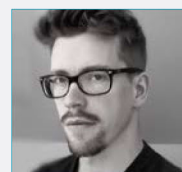
the form to read really well. I get looser with my mark-making in places where there is less detail and need for attention. Work carefully with your rendering and keep in mind that you need to build it up in layers.

05 Finishing touches: Our creatures are almost done. It's time to think a bit more about how the light is affecting them, where to put some darker shadows to accentuate form and mass, and how to shade the lighting to translate

different materials. I focus on making their bottom parts a bit darker so that they are clearly sitting behind a table, which adds depth.

A good way to adjust your drawing's contrasts is by making the places where surfaces are about to touch, darker (the principle of ambient occlusion). You don't have to do this everywhere; carefully pick the places where you want the viewer's eye to focus most on, areas such as the head and hands. ●

The Artist



Brun Croes
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04



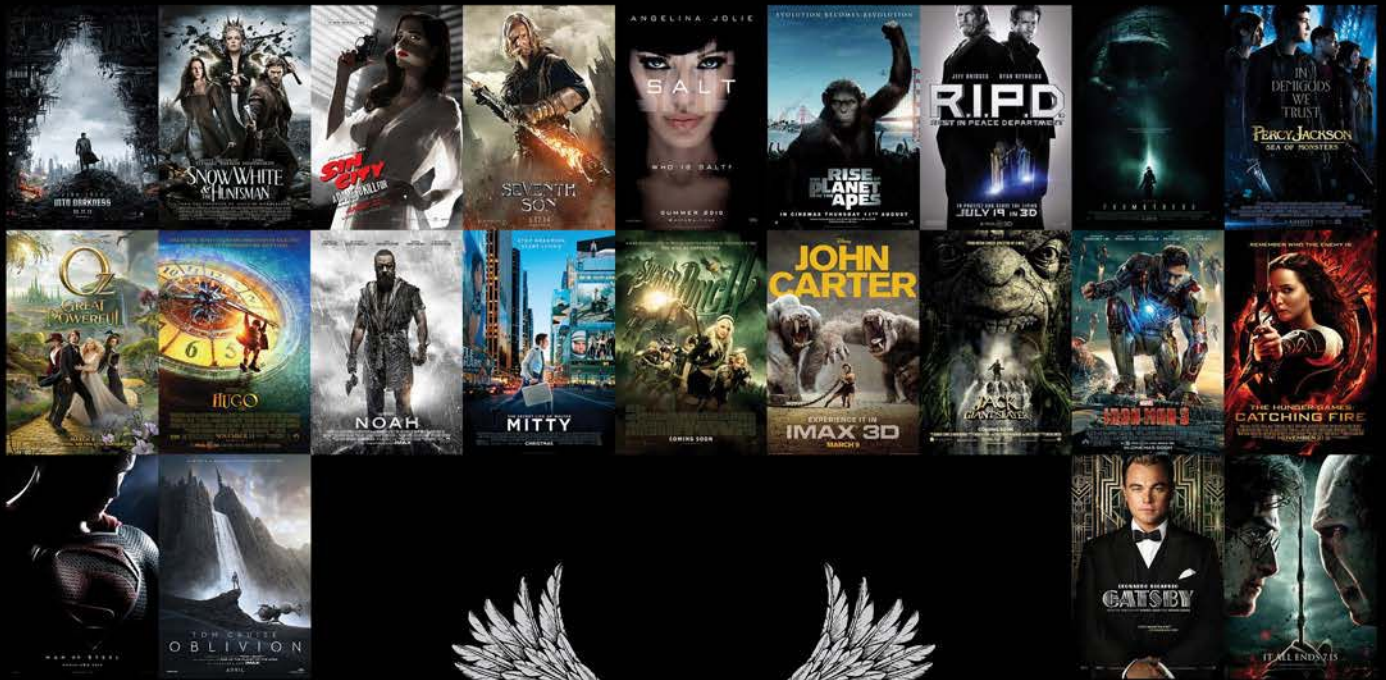
05

03 Add a worm back into one of the creature's hand instead of a piece of fruit. The fruit was taking away from the story and made the character look too friendly. The worm brings back some welcome change from their cuteness

04 Think about the materials your creature is made from. Brun imagines their skin to be smooth and whale like, resulting in a sharp contrast between light and dark to give that smooth feeling

05 Adding a reflection line of light (rim light) to the worms helps to indicate their slimy feel

**DISCOVER HOW TO
SKETCH A CHARACTER
CHAPTER 01 CAN BE
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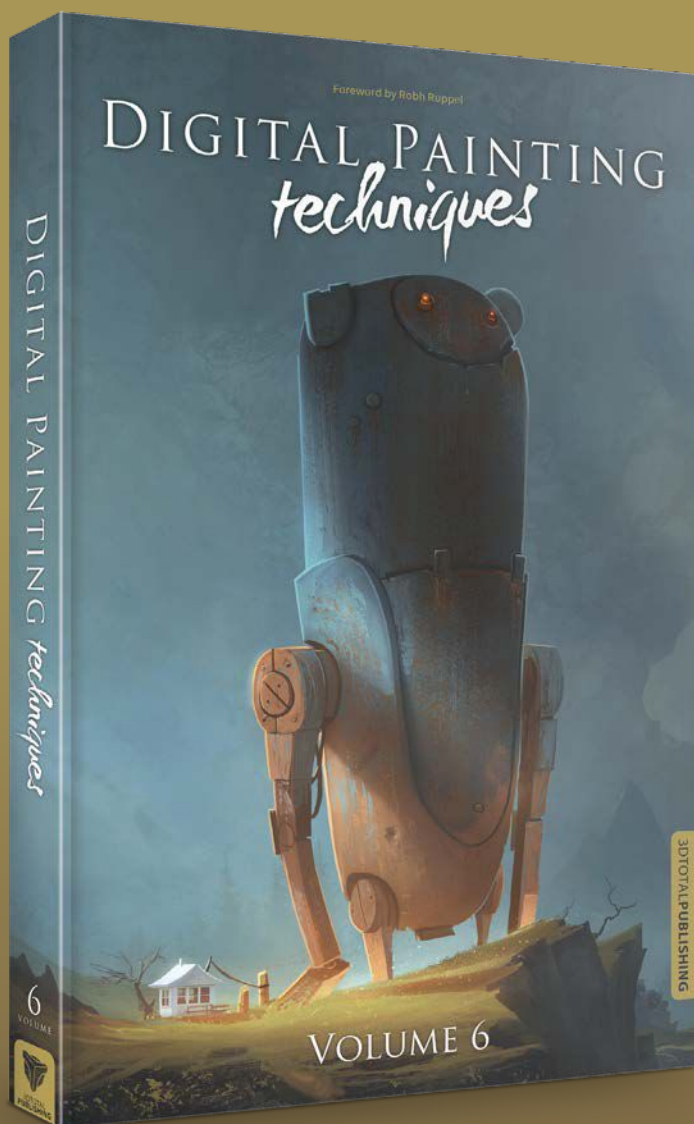
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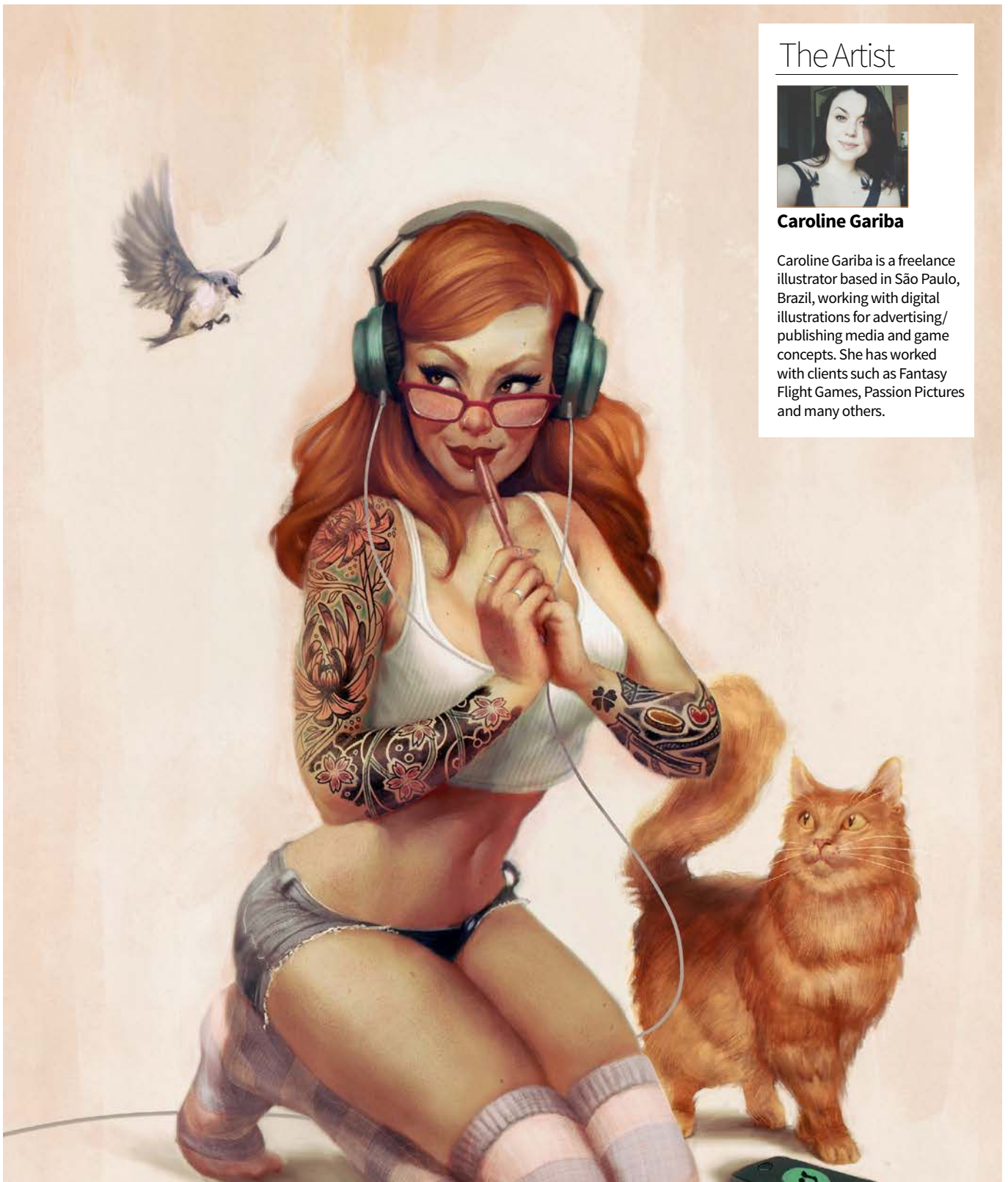
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The Artist



Caroline Gariba

Caroline Gariba is a freelance illustrator based in São Paulo, Brazil, working with digital illustrations for advertising/publishing media and game concepts. She has worked with clients such as Fantasy Flight Games, Passion Pictures and many others.



Pin-up painting techniques

Discover top tips and techniques for painting the perfect pin-up! Caroline Gariba leads you through her process of designing and painting a vintage style pin-up, from the initial sketches and working in grayscale, to adding color and post-production 🎨



Read on to learn how to digitally paint a vintage pin-up in Photoshop...

I love to draw pin-ups; it's one of my favorite things to paint. They are light, beautiful and most of the time showing a big and red-lipped smile. Through decades, many artists have portrayed these girls in so many different ways. Al Buell, Earl Moran, and Gil Elvgren (my favorite one), have mastered the pin-up style so well that it becomes harder to get your own interpretation of it.

The solution I found, is to bring these innocent girls up to the present date, where we have a completely different reference to technology, fashion and beauty standard. So, instead of a record player, she can use her own mobile phone to listen to music, how amazing would it be to the girls from the 50s!

When we have steps, we can see the progress better, making it easier to continue the illustration. As we start working as professionals (in publicity, comics, games, magazines, books and so on) we have to deal with deadlines, pressure and how to quickly



solve problems. Most of the time, your client will want to see the work in progress, so it's important that you have steps to follow and to show without fear of going in the wrong direction. That's what I will explain in this tutorial. A few tips and tricks that always work for me, in order to save time on a project; personal or commissioned.

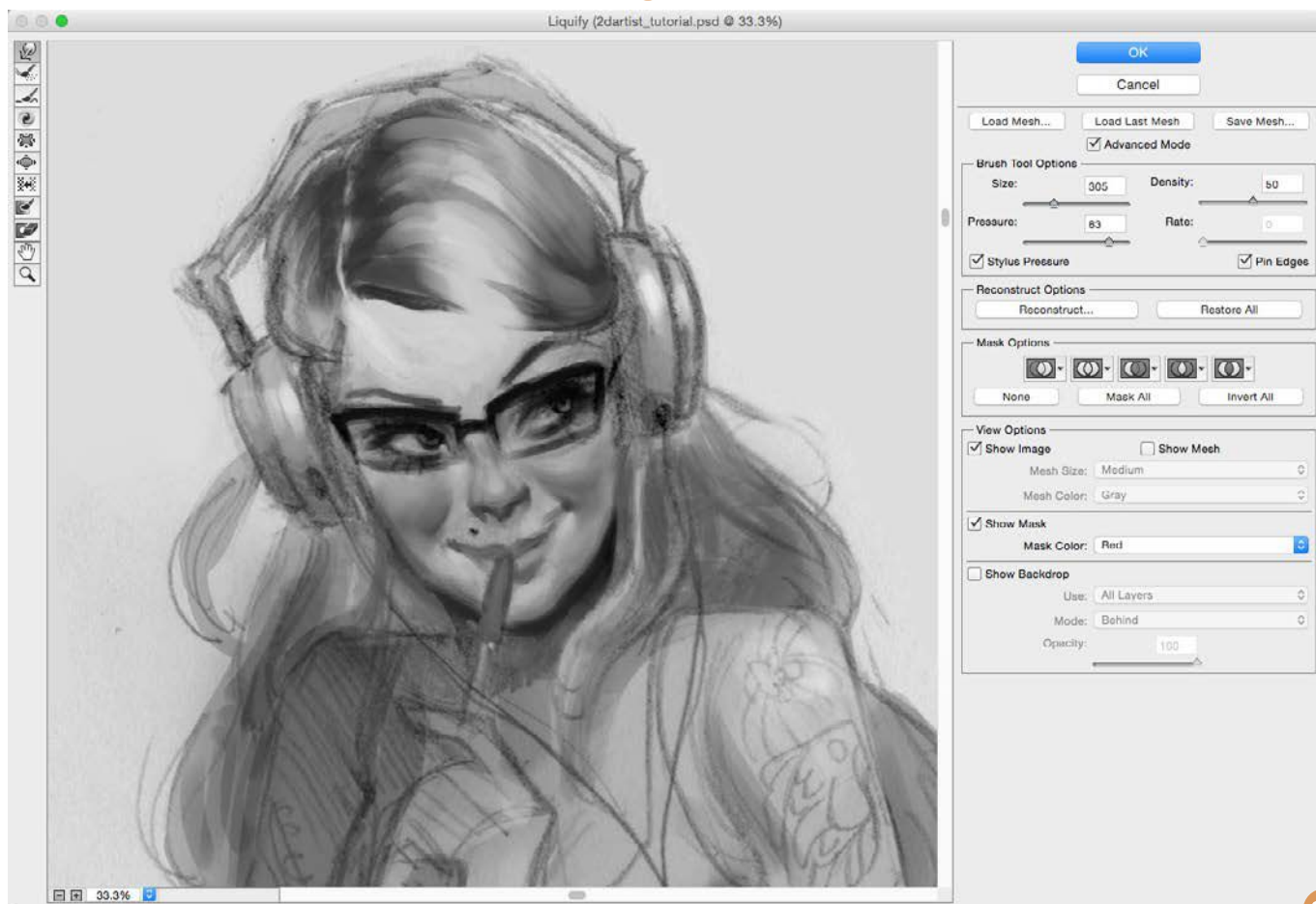
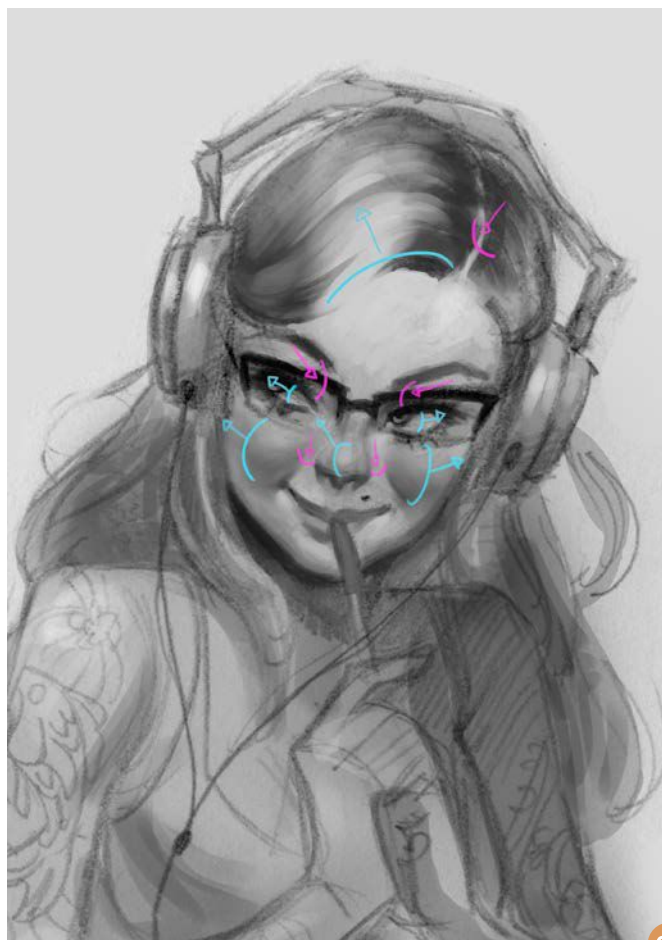
01 **Playing in a sandbox:** The first rule is to keep your mind free. Every idea is a good idea at this point, no matter how bizarre they are. I also think it's important at this point not to use

photos or another artist's images as references because they may influence your ideas and we don't want it now.

As soon as a good idea shows up, I start to draw some tests trying to reach a concept that transmits everything I want. In this case, I really liked the idea of a girl listening to music, and I started from this point to create new poses using the same idea. ▶

01 Some examples of how to evolve an idea and getting it going in the right direction





“A very good tip to verify if everything is in their correct place is to flip the canvas”

02 **Setting the values:** The values of an image will determine the areas of bigger contrast and a focal point; those areas will be useful to direct the viewer's eyes. I never start working from a pure white or pure black, because the white indicates the maximum of light and black indicates the absence of it.

I open the Hue/Saturation panel (Ctrl + B) and I lower the Lightness a little bit until I get the gray color. This way I can work better with the tone scale. Next, I create a new layer (Shift + Ctrl + N), select the Brush tool (B) and with a default rounded brush I start to define the image with shadows and highlights.

03 **Understanding the volumes:** I'm still using the Brush tool (B) with the default rounded brush; there is no need to use textures yet. I'm modeling the character, going from the bigger brush to the small brush. It's very important to structure what you are painting, if you don't know when something is concave or convex, it will be visible in the final illustration, looking like everything is a big flat image. So, understand what you are painting, think about what goes in and what goes out. For example, between the nose and the cheek there is a soft cavity (concave), the character's eyes are spherical, they go out (convex) and the inner part of the ear have both concave and convex areas.

04 **Corrections:** As I'm at the beginning of the illustration I do all the necessary corrections. At this moment I like to use photos as references because they help me to quickly understand something that might be out of place. Remember, you are not cheating by using references – use them as you want and in your favor. A very good tip to verify if everything is in their correct place is to flip the canvas, this way your brain processes a new image and can easily detect possible errors. To flip the canvas: Image > Image Rotation > Flip Canvas Horizontal.

One of the most useful tools in Photoshop is Liquify (Filter > Liquify), I use it to do local adjustments, such as the shape of the face, legs and arms size and thickness. It's an excellent time saver when you need to deal with deadlines.

05 **Working in grayscale:** Now I have the correct pose and I can detail more without risking polishing something that is wrong. With the same rounded brush I start polishing



the image even more. I split the hair by adding strand sections, mark the area around the eyes where the eyelashes will go and define the tattoo lines. It's important to say that details like skin pores, hair strands and textures must be added at the end of the illustration, when colors are ►

02 The values are already set and ready to go to the next step

03 Some examples of the things that are concave and convex. The cyan lines are the concave areas, and the magenta lines are the convex

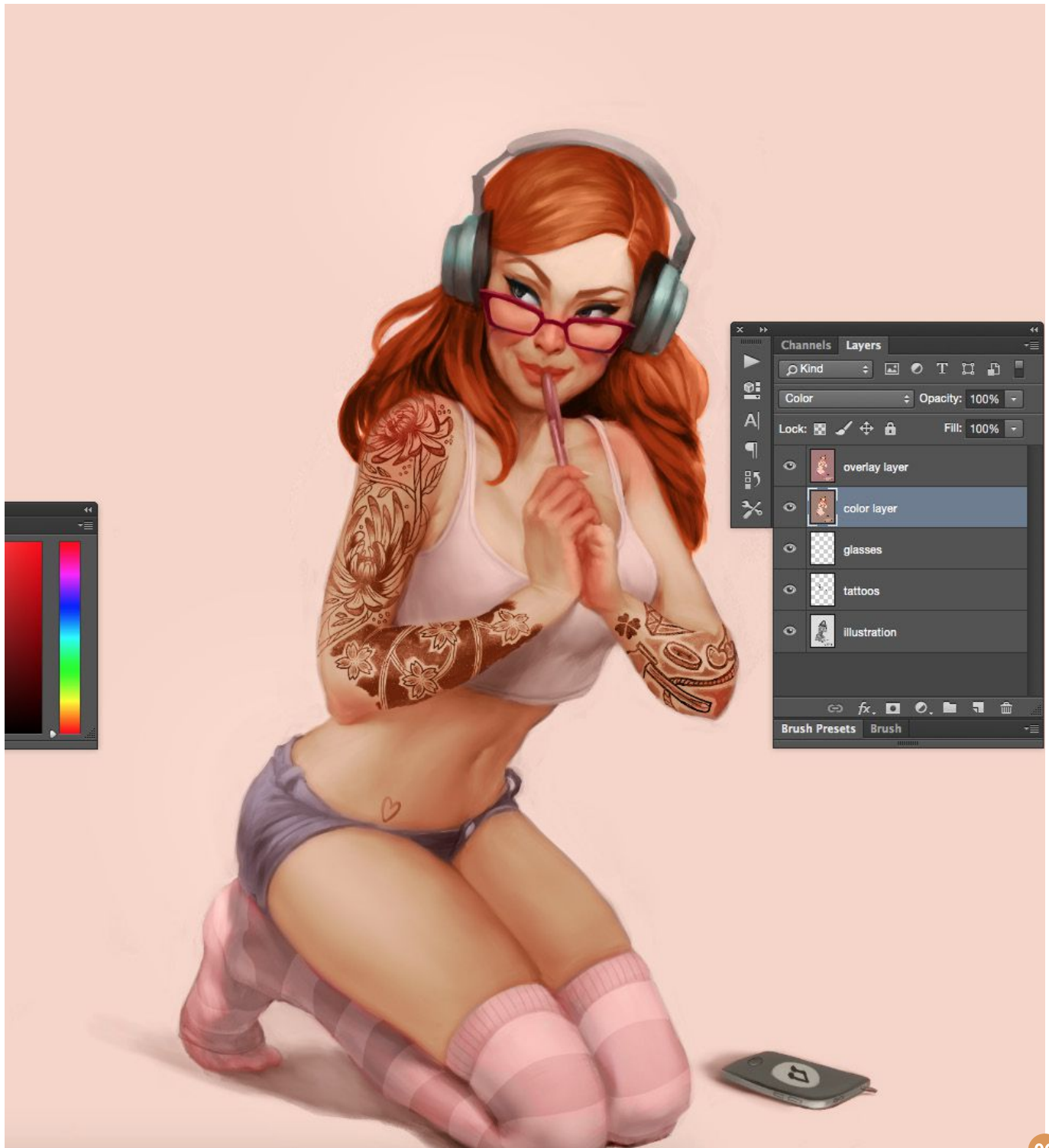
04 Some local adjustments on the face of the pin-up

05 Close up on our pin-up girl with more of the details already set

PRO TIP Don't be afraid of reference images

The successful way of using reference photos isn't to achieve a painting as close as possible to the reference, it's to get your own interpretation of it. If you look for sketches of great masters, like Gil Elvgren or Leyendecker, you'll find many interpretations of the same idea, various hand/head poses, line actions, even color palette studies. They try to reach the most harmonious way to show an idea, even if it means your final image is further from looking like the reference photo.

05



06

well defined. If you add too many details before working with color, it will be a little bit more difficult to do it right because it will take too much time painting all of those hair strands that you could have done later. This is another time saver tip.

06 Adding the color: Here comes the fun part. I create a new layer (Shift + Ctrl + N) and change its property from Normal to Color. With the default rounded brush I start adding colors, a little bit of orange and pink to the skin,

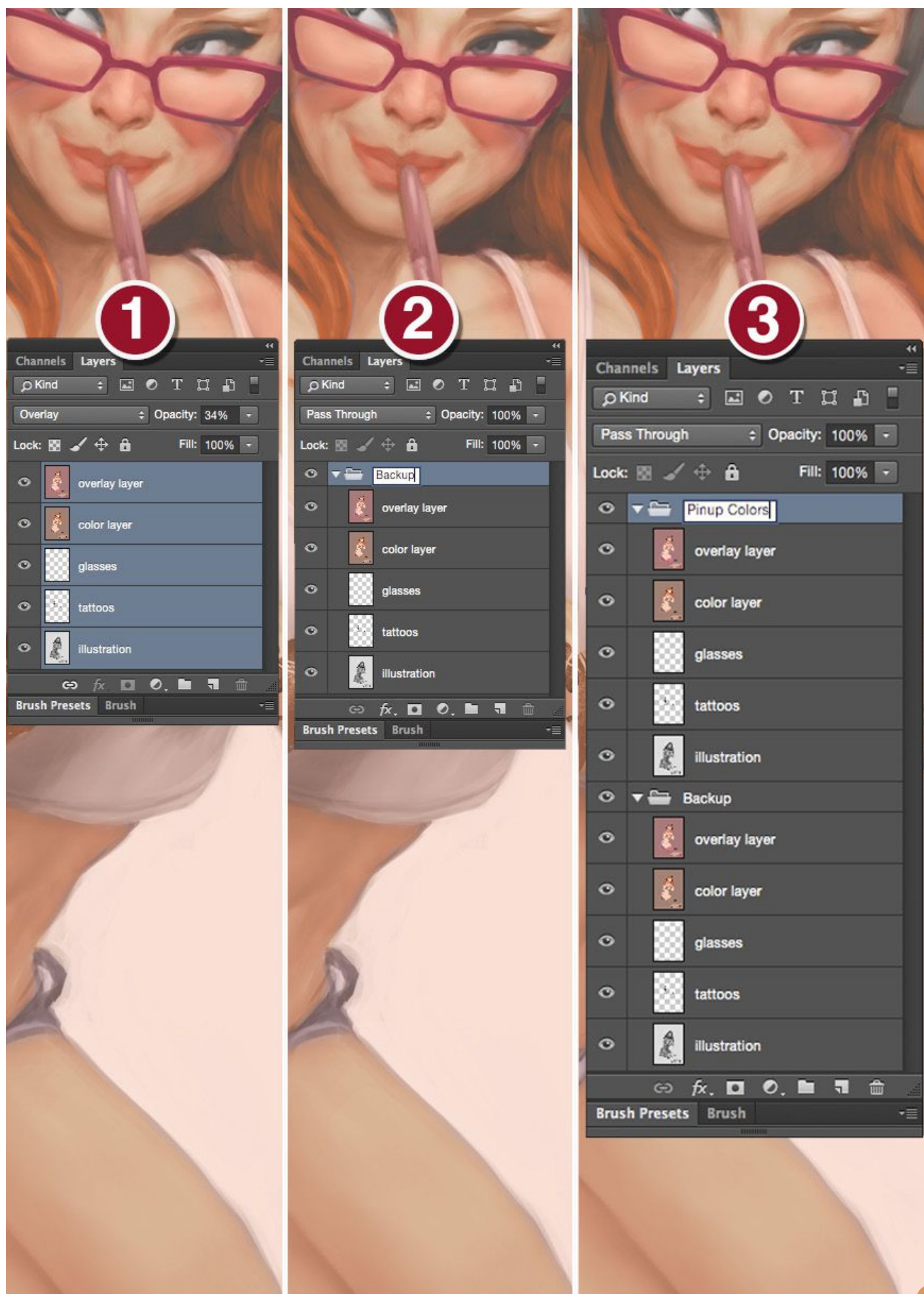
some red on the cheeks and move on. Next, I duplicate this color layer using the shortcut Ctrl + J and change its property to Overlay, with opacity between 30% and 50%, depending on the illustration. There is no need to use just one layer for color; you can create a lot of them to separate the areas, such as one for the skin, another for the clothes. It's your call. Feel comfortable.

07 Have a backup plan: Before I continue, I create a backup group. Having a backup is an excellent time saver and can really save you

sometimes, in case you don't like something. Hold shift and select all of your layers, then use Ctrl + G to group them. If you double click the group name you can edit it. Now, select the ►

06 A Color layer combined with an Overlay layer make things more saturated

07 1) Selected layers
2) Group of layers
3) Backup Group and Illustration Group





08

group, Ctrl + J to duplicate it and voilà! You have a backup group saved and a new one to continue working with.

08 Starting to polish: With the main colors defined, it's time to add the reflected light, define better the shadows, add hair strands, freckles, eyelashes and every detail you want. Texture brushes are allowed now, they will make your painting richer and with an organic aspect. For you to be sure that the values are still correct while you paint, go to the Layers panel at the bottom and create an Adjustment Layer > Black & White; turn it on sometimes to check if everything is in the right place.

09 Adding new elements: New ideas might come in the middle of the process; there is nothing wrong with that, unless it compromises your composition. In this case, I add the new elements in a new layer, so I can test if they will really work, without ruining what was already done. If they work, go ahead! If they don't, just delete the layer and continue having fun.

10 Finish with post-production: Here I repeat step 7 before I continue. With the illustration almost finished, it's post-production time – add textures and do some color correction.



09

⚡ PRO TIPS

So many options

Working with digital media brings you a whole new world of possibilities; use it in your favor. With only a few clicks, you can test a bunch of palettes to see what works better. If you're unhappy with your colors, don't hesitate to change them! At the bottom of the Layer panel, go into the Adjustment Layer, you'll find a lot of color adjustments that will make it easier and faster to test new color palettes. Curves, Selective Color and Color Balance are my favorite ones!

Almost a real canvas

If you want to make your digital painting look even more like traditional media, you can add an old paper or fabric texture on it. Take the paper texture and drop it on your canvas, select the Move tool (V), click over any anchor (the anchors are the little squares around the limit of the image) and adjust it to fill the whole area of your painting. Now, change the property of the texture layer from Normal to Multiply. To fix the luminosity, lower the opacity to 10% or the percentage you feel more comfortable with.

At the bottom of the Layer panel, go into the Adjustment Layer, but this time choose Color Balance. With this layer I can make some little shadow, mid tones and highlight corrections. Next, go to Filter > Noise > Add Noise, set it at about 7% and choose the option Uniform. Beyond the texture, the noise helps to unite all the elements of the illustration, putting everything in the same atmosphere. ●

08 Adding finer details to her face and a quick check of the values

09 Add a bird and a cat, things that people usually find cute, to bring more of a contrast with her tattoos

10 Final render of the pin-up girl, with the color corrections and applied textures

The Artist



Caroline Gariba
carolinegariba.com



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beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop® characters

Following on from the highly successful *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop*, this latest title explores the popular techniques used in character design.

Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting: Characters is a comprehensive guide for artists wishing to create convincing and detailed characters. It features established artists such as Charlie Bowater (concept artist at Atomhawk) and Derek Stenning (freelance concept artist and illustrator, with clients including Marvel Entertainment and Nintendo) who share their industry experiences by covering such aspects as posing characters, choosing the correct costumes, conveying emotions, and creating suitable moods.

Comprehensive step-by-step instructions – plus a quick tips section demonstrating how to paint elements that are integral to character design and a glossary covering essential Photoshop tools – make this an invaluable resource for those looking to learn new skills, as well as those pursuing the next level.

The Artist



Szymon Biernacki

biernac.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Szymon Biernacki is a digital artist based in Warsaw, Poland, working in the animation industry. Currently he is an art director working with The SPA Studios on various feature animated movies.

Craft stylized illustrations

Discover the process Szymon Biernacki used to create his illustration *Morning....* From the initial sketches, to form and adding color, Szymon shares his thought process to help you create a cool stylized image ▶



Szymon Biernacki shares the work flow behind his stylized image, *Morning...*

This tutorial will explain the creative process behind one of my latest personal paintings entitled *Morning...* The idea for this illustration came to my mind while I was watching a wildlife documentary that featured a beat about the Japanese Macaque. I felt those monkeys had a lot of comical potential, mainly because of their very human behavior. Actually, I find all monkeys extremely interesting to draw and I often come back to them in my drawings.

For a long while I wanted to paint something that would be a bit more of an abstract, poster-like illustration rather than a typical visual development/movie moment piece that I usually do; something that would focus only on characters and their relations and not on the environmental context of the scene. I felt that those Macaques with their pink faces had the graphic potential that would help me achieve that goal.

The technical side of painting this image was pretty much straightforward – I didn't use much more than two or three brushes and some adjustment layers – so I won't focus too much on how it was painted but rather on the thinking process behind the choices that I made.

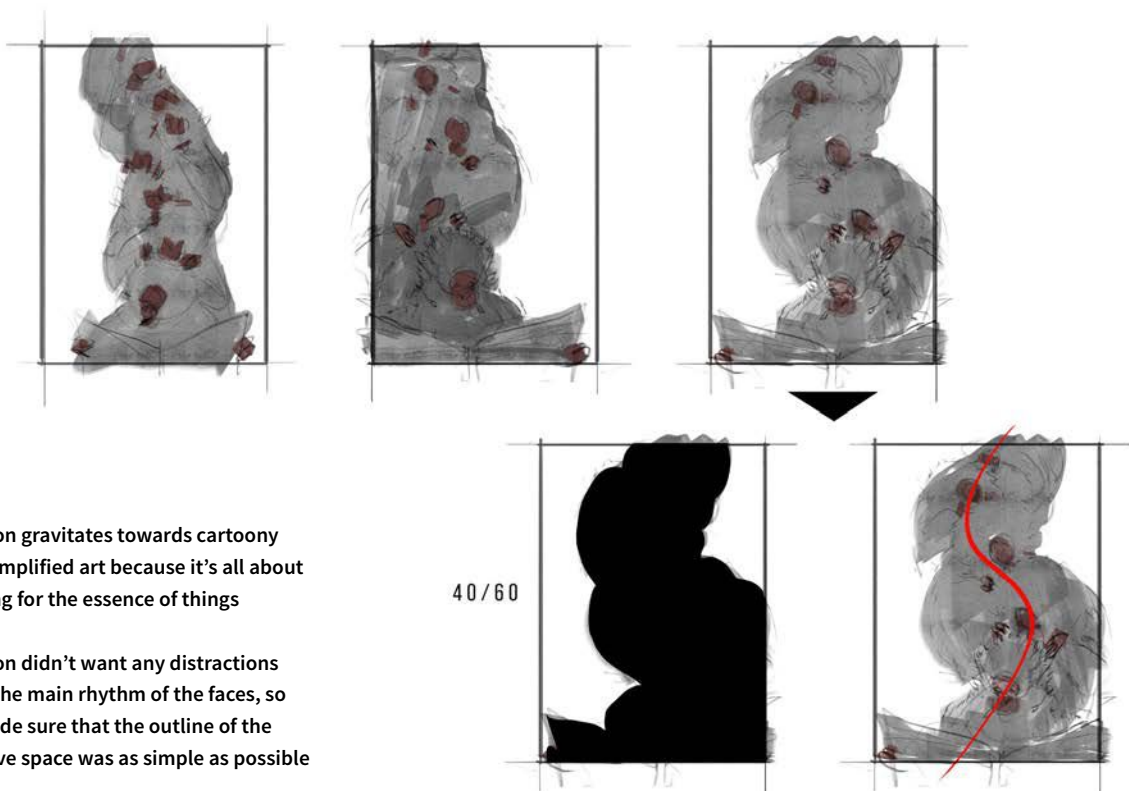


01 Sketches and research: I started out with some fairly realistic sketches of monkeys just to get myself more acquainted with the subject matter. I always stylize my illustrations and I'm falling more and more in love with simplicity in art. I think the reason why I gravitate towards cartoony and simplified art is the fact that it's all about looking for the essence of things. You try to analyze the object that you are going to depict and understand what the key visual components are that determine your emotional response to it. And then you look for the simplest and clearest ways to bring those qualities to the surface.

So what I found interesting about those monkeys was that they are basically furballs

with inappropriately pink faces stuck on top of them. At some point I even considered pushing the design to a point where the heads would literally be balls and the faces would consist of combinations of three circles of different sizes.

02 Looking for composition: Then I moved on to thinking about the composition. I wanted the monkeys to form a supposedly endless row that continues far outside of the picture frame. The faces and hands were supposed to be the main focus so I wanted to make sure that the rhythm they create flows nicely. Another, more general aspect was the relationship between the characters and the canvas. I wanted the clustered bodies of the monkeys to create a single shape that would ▶



01 Szymon gravitates towards cartoony and simplified art because it's all about looking for the essence of things

02 Szymon didn't want any distractions from the main rhythm of the faces, so he made sure that the outline of the positive space was as simple as possible



03

contrast with the background, so I needed to find a pleasing balance between those masses.

The negative space around the monkeys was an important question as well. I didn't want any distractions from the main rhythm of faces, so I made sure that the outline of the positive space was as simple as possible. Also, there's no negative space inside the main shape of the figures to avoid any unnecessary contrasts.

03 **Fleshing out the idea:** When I was happy with the general composition doodle, I blew it up to the size of the final painting, diminished the opacity and started working on a more refined sketch. This is a critical phase in my workflow. I try to break up my work into steps that concentrate on a single aspect of the image at a time, such as general composition, refining the drawing, establishing value relationships and so on. Of course I am always keeping the big picture in mind.

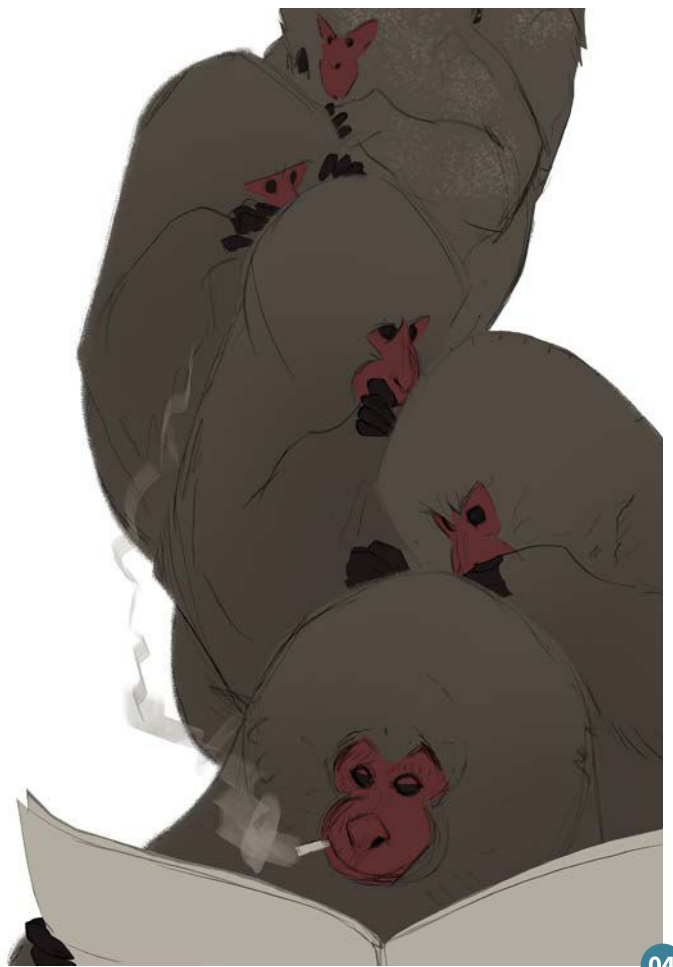
So at this point I tried to resolve all the fundamental problems of the image and create the backbone that I will stick to all the way through. That included perspective, anatomy, posing and attitudes of the figures, design and stylization. I also looked for opportunities to

introduce compositional lines to reinforce the initial armature of the painting.

I always take my time at this stage and make sure I'm happy with it before progressing. And it sometimes takes a *lot* of time.

04 **First value/color pass:** This step usually is the most important step in the process of making a picture work – establishing the value structure. I never know whether the image is going to be good until I work out value relationships. Usually at this stage I work in black-and-white only, but this picture was simple enough to safely incorporate basic colors as well. I never use pure white usually, but this time I wanted to experiment and decided to try out a white background.

I'm a big fan of Mike Mignola and his cover for *Hellboy: The Island*, which has a bold graphic silhouette over a white backdrop; this was a huge inspiration here. At this point I still wanted to keep the colors of the monkeys fairly close to real life although for compositional reasons I made the hands almost black. The placement of the small dark shapes of the hands and eyes combined with the reddish faces helped create a strong main line of interest.



04

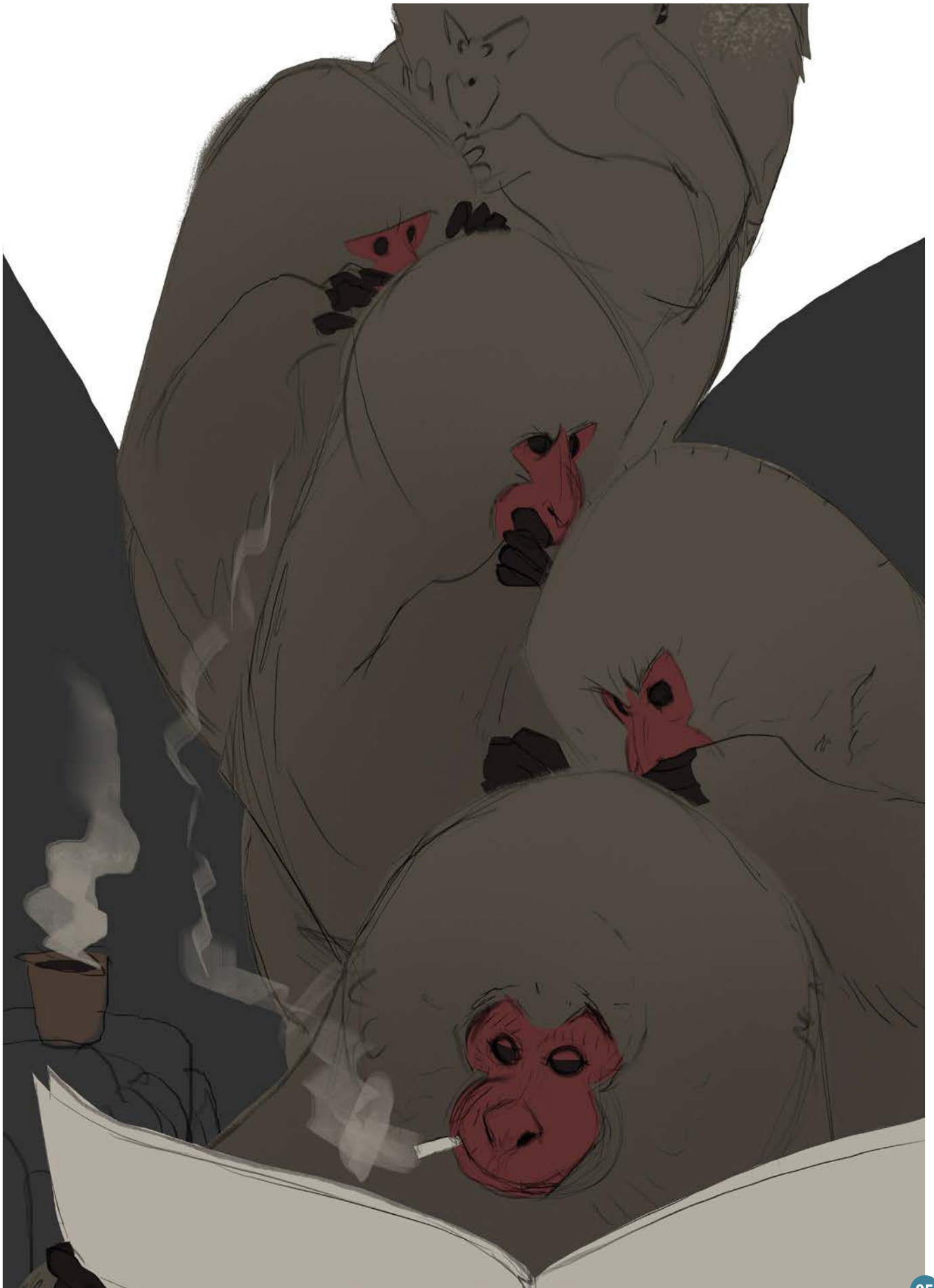
05 **Second thoughts:** I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to achieve with this image and I started to have doubts about the whole concept and my creative choices. As it turned out later, it wasn't the last time during the process of creating this painting. It seems that when insecurities emerge we turn to our comfort zones. And since I was getting a little afraid of leaving that background white I started to think about adding some environment to the scene after all.

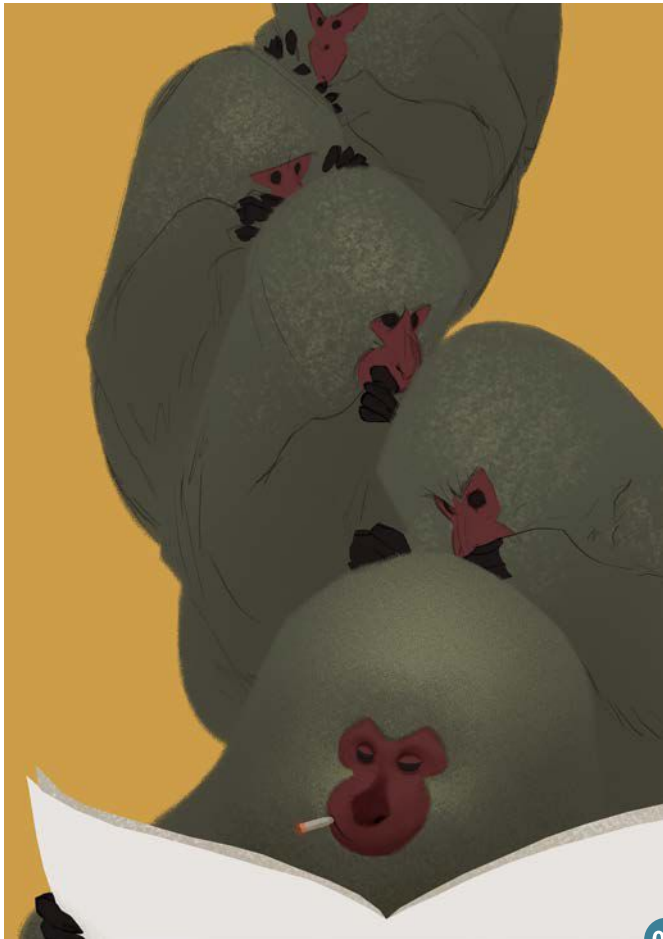
I didn't like how the white background was contrasting with the characters, drawing too much attention to the edges of the shapes of the monkeys

03 At this point Szymon resolved all the fundamental problems of the image and created the backbone that would be stuck to throughout

04 The placement of small dark shapes of the hands and eyes, combined with the reddish faces, helped to create a strong main line of interest

05 The white background was contrasting with the characters, drawing too much attention to the edges of the shapes of the monkeys





06

much attention to the edges of the shapes of the monkeys. I tried to add some rocks and strengthen the mood of the image by adding a cup of coffee. After a few futile attempts to fill the background in some reasonable way, I decided that sticking to my initial concept was the way to go and that maybe I'll come up with some solution later on.

06 Color, texture and form: At this point I focused on the first monkey and tried to push the forms a little bit to see what kind of rendering I would be happy with. I didn't want any realistic textures, as I've become less and less interested in realistic textures over the last couple of years. I've realized that what makes an image interesting to me is the graphic statement that it's built upon. I respond to simple shapes, well organized values, good colors and visual symbols.

So in this image I decided to go for simplified, toy-like solutions and only suggest the basic qualities of fur like softer edges, soft overall shading and a little bit of grain that makes it look like if it was evenly trimmed.

I was still annoyed by the white background so I tried some other colors but still wasn't pleased with the result.



07

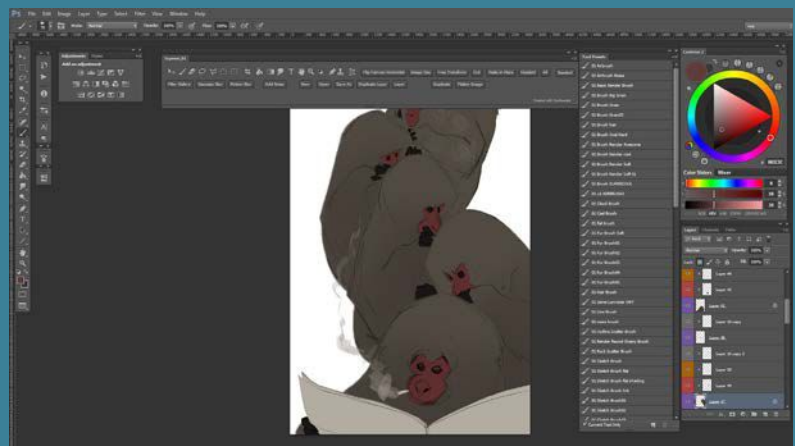
07 Defining the forms: In the previous step, I decided that I would like to keep the whole scene under a soft ambient light. I quickly tried out more directional light options,

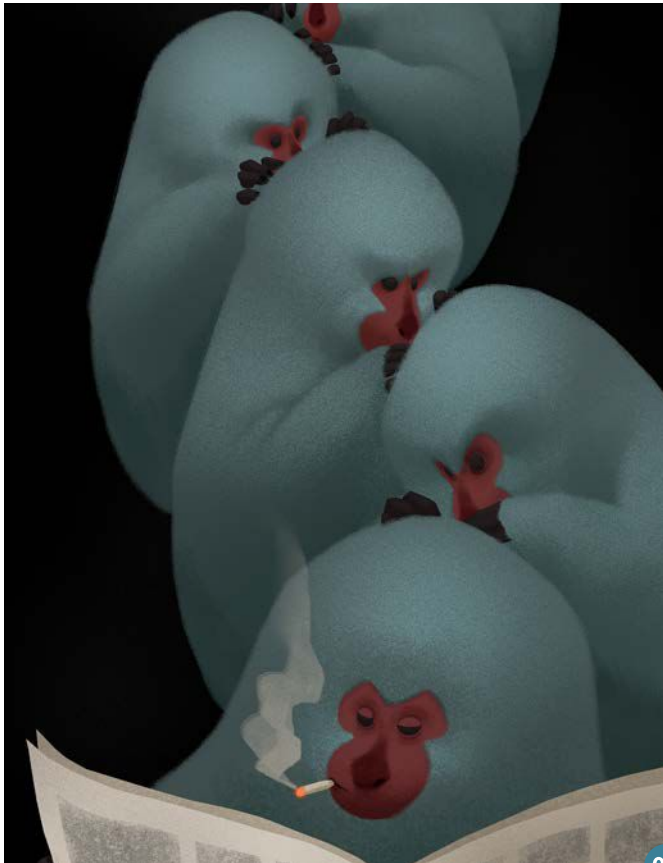
but I felt it was taking away from the abstract quality of the idea I was trying to generate, and creating just too many distracting little shapes in and around the artwork.

PRO TIP

Staying organized

I use a lot of layers and I'm quite strict when it comes to organizing them. All the shapes are separated from each other and I color code the layers in Photoshop depending on their content, to easily navigate between them (for example all the layers with skin are color coded red). This approach helps me stay graphic and quickly make major color and value changes in the early stages of work.





08

This stage was all about rendering the forms of the monkeys and bringing them to the same level of finish. I wanted the fur to feel soft and I was careful to avoid any contrast that would compete with the hands and the faces. I also decided not to put any specular lights in the eyes of the characters because... well, I simply liked it more that way. I'm trying to listen to my gut more these days and not over-think things when it comes to my personal art.

I also added some smoke from the cigarette giving it a more angular shape, compared to the overall round shape language, to draw more attention to the bottom of the image where the viewer is supposed to look first.

I changed the background color to black which I felt worked way better than the light tones.

08 Playing around with colors: Having rendered the whole image I must say I wasn't very happy with it. I initially imagined it to be bold, simple and light-hearted, and it turned out to be dull and I really struggled with it along the way. So I left it like that and decided it was one of those experiments that I wouldn't ever show to anyone.

Every now and again I paint an image that I think I've got figured out in my head and it's going to be nice and relaxing, and for some reason it

turns out to look nothing like what I've imagined and it's just frustrating instead. This was definitely one of those.

But after a few months I was browsing through my folders and I opened the file again, and I thought it wasn't that bad after all. I just needed some fresh perspective. So I played around with colors again and got rid of the depressing brown hue of the fur. Changing it to blue gave more life and vibrancy to the image and made the faces pop out more. It also got more abstract which was my intention from the very beginning.

09 Taking a step back: After having a fresh look at the image I decided a couple of the monkeys needed to be repainted. I felt that one of them (the second one in the row) was breaking the flow of the characters and it needed to sit more frontally to the viewer. The other one (the fourth one) was just badly drawn and needed a better structure. So I created a white layer, lowered the opacity to see the image underneath and sketched the monkeys again. Then I just rendered them to fit the rest of the image. I rendered most of the image with just one brush that had a strong grainy texture to it.

10 Final rendering and touching up: Having repainted two of the monkeys I still felt the image wasn't strong enough. I decided to increase the saturation of the main



09

light and make it bluer. That way the neutral shadows and cool highlights of the fur would create a nice warm vs. cool relationship, which is always pleasing to the eye and makes the image more vibrant and alive. Also the color of the faces gained some variety and life.

Pushing the overall contrast just a little bit helped the image as well, as the heads of the monkeys got even more prominent. I added some cool tones to the newspaper and to the background so that all the elements of the painting would have this warm vs. cool thing going on. The last little element that I added was the fleas around the monkey's hands.

I think these last touches I made finally made the image work. ●

06 Szymon has become less and less interested in realistic textures over the last couple of years

07 Try not to over think things at this stage

08 Szymon decided to alter to colors to make certain elements pop

09 A couple of the monkeys needed to be repainted to have a better structure

The Artist



Szymon Biernacki
biernac.com



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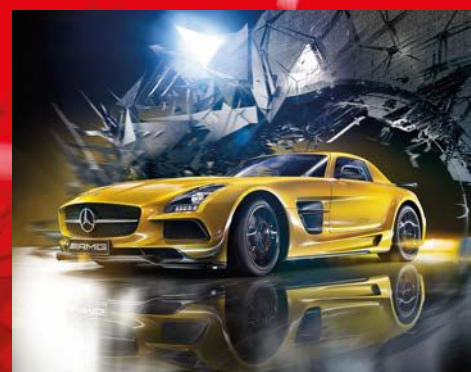
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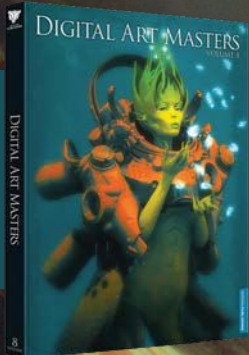
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The Artist



Piotr Jabłoński

[behance.net/nicponim](https://www.behance.net/nicponim)

Software Used:
Photoshop

Piotr Jabłoński is a concept artist and illustrator from Białystok, Poland. His clients include Applibot, Inc., Cloud Share Inc., Evermotionvfx, VFX workshops and Platige Image.

In my opinion, the first stages of creating an artwork are the most important. Before I start working in Photoshop, I give some thought to the mood and emotions I want to convey. Then the next step is to do some research and compare this idea to existing artworks, photos or movies.

The image will depict a destroyed city that is bathed in delicate morning light spreading across

the tops of the buildings. I've chosen this as a symbol of new beginnings, or perhaps of a better future (**Fig.01**).

I start the project by drawing the basic perspective lines. Then I choose a fairly large brush and paint the base color to create the mood. I have never found the black-and-white method right for me, as I believe that color creates the mood of your art.

The next step is to define the composition. I draw basic shapes and ignore the detail for now. I set the proper light direction and intensity to check how it works in the scene. At this stage I also check color variations by using the Color Balance tool or Channel Mixer.

Sometimes I use a reference image or one of my previous images in an Overlay layer with reduced opacity to see how it looks. This diversifies the



01



02



03

color palette and sometimes it gives your image an interesting direction. At this point, if I feel that the image is looking good, I usually merge the layers (Fig.02).

Details

This is the longest and most laborious part of painting, but watching the progress is very satisfying. I don't use many brushes; usually I choose five or six and tend to use the same one for about 90-percent of the painting. I add windows and roofs to the buildings and try to add interesting details to the lower floors (Fig.03).

Next I identify the shape of the sculpture that is in the main square. For the tower in the background, I use a texture from an Evermotion VFX concept. I don't generally approve of pasting in photos, but when doing commercial work I know that timings and the result are the most important thing.

You may need to practically repaint the element entirely, of course, but this method still saves you a lot of time.

The work is now 70-percent complete, so I merge the layers and create a new one to add detail. I change the mountains in the background, adding mist, fog and smoke to create depth (Fig.04).

Finishing touches

At this stage the image is almost finished, but you can always try to make something more of it.

I find this is the most enjoyable part of the process. For this work, I experiment with different color layers, using Color Balance and the Channel



04



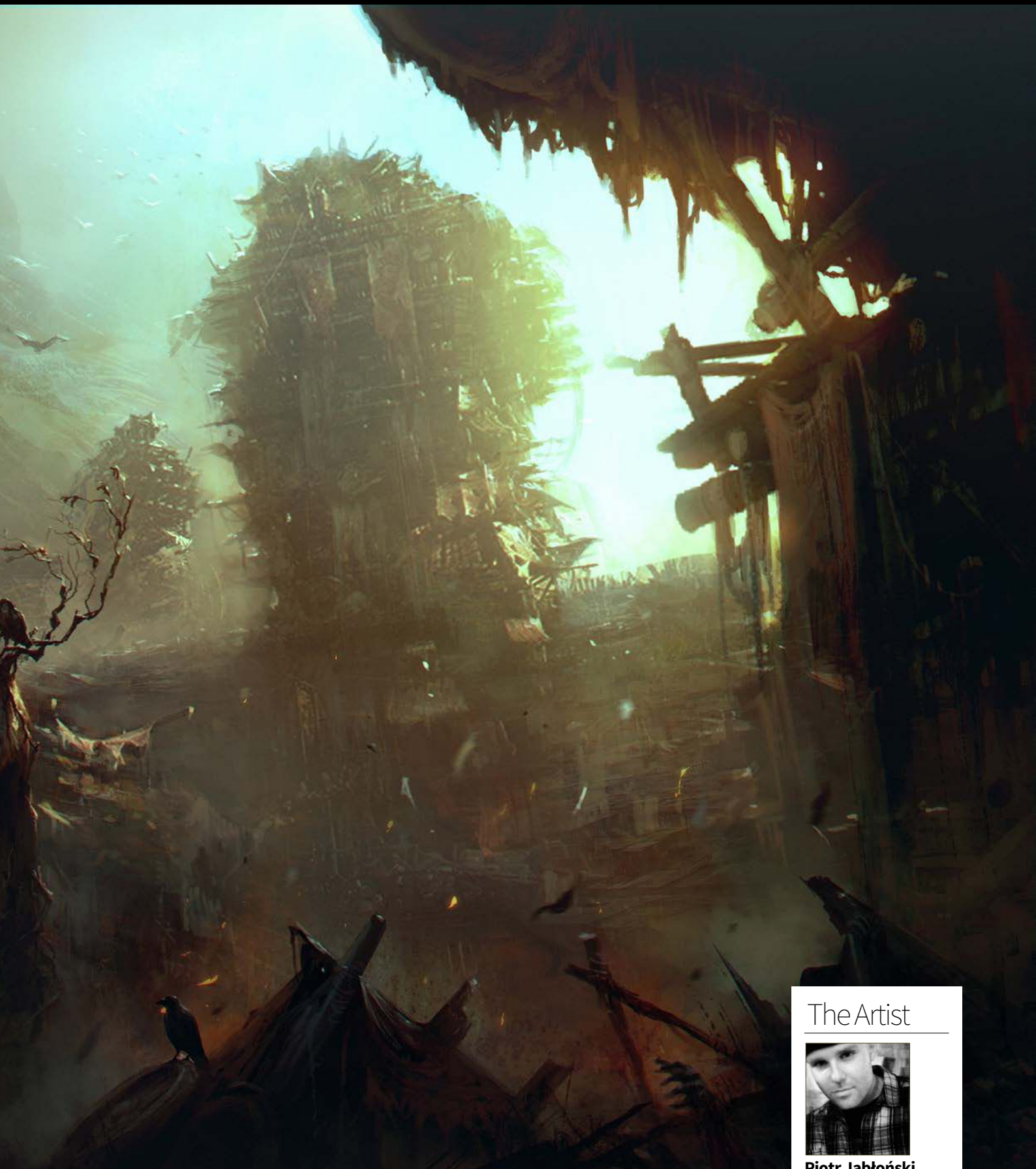
05

Mixer. I also adjust the contrast settings and check the gradients to see how they are working when blended (Fig.05).

It is quite easy to mess up the image at this stage, so I keep the output on a separate layer in order to check it from time to time to see if my direction

is still good. It is a good habit to leave your image for a day or two and then take a fresh look at it, as this can reveal previously unseen mistakes. Seeking a friend's opinion can also be very helpful – it doesn't necessarily have to be an artist, it's just good to know sometimes what people think about your work. ●





The Artist



Piotr Jabłoński

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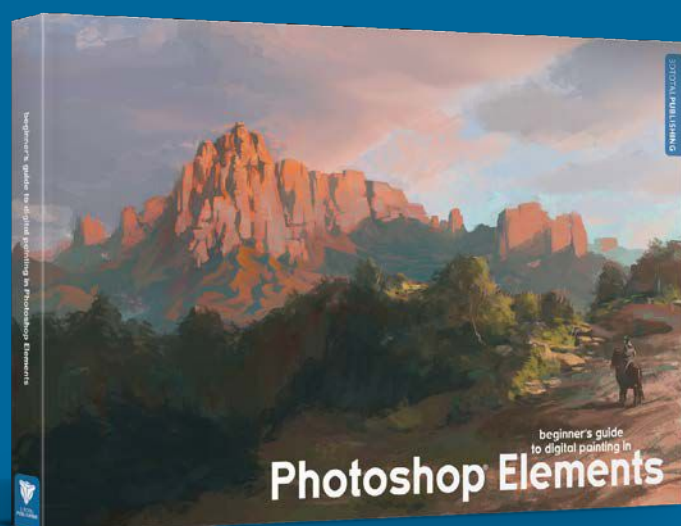
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